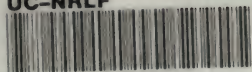
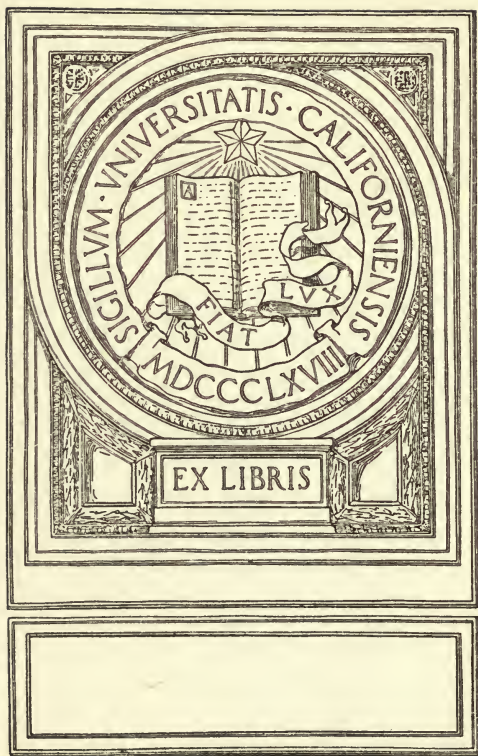


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*Arthur Stirling*

# The Journal of Arthur Stirling

("The Valley of the Shadow")

*By William Heinemann*

Revised and Condensed  
With an Introductory Sketch



London  
William Heinemann  
1903

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MAIN

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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THE matter which is given to the public in this book will speak with a voice of its own; it is necessary, however, to say a few words in advance to inform the reader of its history.

The writer of the journal herein contained was not known, I believe, to more than a dozen people in this huge city in which he lived. I am quite certain that I and my wife were the only persons he ever called his friends. I met him shortly after his graduation from college, and for the past few years I knew, and I alone, of a life of artistic devotion of such passionate fervor as I expect never to meet with again.

Arthur Stirling was entirely a self-educated man; he had worked at I know not how many impossible occupations, and labored in the night-time like the heroes one reads about. He taught himself to read five languages, and at the time when I saw him last he knew more great poetry

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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by heart than any man of letters that I have ever met. He was the author of one book, a tragedy in blank verse, called *The Captive*; that drama forms the chief theme of this journal. For the rest, it seems to me enough to quote this notice, which appeared in the *New York Times* for June 9, 1902.

STIRLING.—By suicide in the Hudson River, poet and man of genius, in the 22d year of his age, only son of Richard T. and Grace Stirling, deceased, of Chicago.

Chicago papers please copy.

Arthur Stirling was in appearance a tall, dark-haired boy—he was really only a boy—with a singularly beautiful face, and a strange wistful expression of the eyes that I think will haunt me as long as I live. I made him, somewhat externally and feebly, I fear, one of the characters in a recently published novel. That he was a lonely spirit will be plain enough from his writings; he lived among the poverty-haunted thousands of this city, without (so he once told me) ever speaking to a living soul for a week. Pecuniarily I could not help him—for though he was poor, I was scarcely less so. At the time of his frightful death I had not seen him for nearly two months—owing to circumstances

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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which were in no way my fault, but for which I can nevertheless not forgive myself.

The writing of *The Captive*, as described in these papers, was begun in April, 1901. I was myself at that time in the midst of a struggle to have a book published. It was not really published until late in that year—at which time *The Captive* was finished and already several times rejected. It was an understood thing between us that should my book succeed it would mean freedom for both of us, but that, unfortunately, was not to be.

Early in April of 1902 I had succeeded in laying by provisions enough to last me while I wrote another book, and I fled away to put up my tent in the wilderness. The last time that I ever saw Arthur Stirling was in his room the night before I left. He smiled very bravely and said that he would keep his courage up, that he was pretty sure he would come out all right.

I did not expect him to write often—I knew that he was too poor for that; but after six weeks had passed and I had not heard from him at all, I wrote to a friend to go and see him. It developed that he had moved. The lodging-house

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keeper could only say that he had left her his baggage, being unable to pay his rent; and that he "looked sick." Where he went she did not know, and all efforts of mine to find him were of no avail. The only person that I knew of to ask was a certain young girl, a typewriter, who had known him for years, and who had worshiped him with a strange and terrible passion—who would have been his wife, or his slave, if he had not been as iron in such things, a man so lost in his vision that I suppose he always thought she was lost in it too. This girl had copied his manuscripts for years, with the plea that he might pay her when he "succeeded"; and she has all of his manuscripts now, except what I have, if she is alive. All that we could learn was that she had "gone away"; I feel pretty certain that she went in search of him.

In addition, all that I have to tell is that on Monday, June 9th last I received a large express package from Arthur. It was sent from New York, but marked as coming from another person—evidently to avoid giving an address of his own. Upon opening it I found two packages, one of them carefully sealed and marked upon the outside, *The Captive*; the other was the



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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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manuscript of this journal, and upon the top of it was the following letter:

MY DEAR —: You have no doubt been wondering what has become of me. I have been having a hard time of it. I wish I could find some way to make this thing a little easier, but I can not. When you read this letter I shall be dead. There is nothing that I can tell you about it that you will not read in the papers I send you. It is simply that I was born to be an artist, and that as anything else I can not live. The burden that has been laid upon me I can not bear another day. I have told the whole story of it in this book—I have kept myself alive for months, sick and weeping with agony, in order that I might tear it out of my heart and get it written. It has been my last prayer that the struggle my life has been may somehow not be useless. There will come others after me—others perhaps keener than I—and oh, the world must not kill them all!

You will take this manuscript, please, and go over it, and cut out what you like to make it printable, and write a few words to make people understand about it. And then see if any one will publish it. You know more about all these things than I do. If it should sell, keep part of the money for your own work and give the rest to poor Ellen. As to *The Captive*—I all but burned it, as you will read; but keep it, sealed as I have sealed it, for two years, and then offer it to some publishers—to others than the nine who have already rejected it. If you can not find any one to take it, then burn it, or keep it for love, I do not care which.

I am writing this on Thursday night, and I am almost dead. I mean to get some money to-morrow, and then to buy a ticket for as far up the Hudson as I can go. In the evening I mean to find a steep bank, and, with a heavy dumb-bell I have bought, and a strong rope, I think I can find the peace that I have been seeking.

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The first thing that I have to say to you about it is, that when you get this letter it will be over and done, and that I want you, for God's sake, not to make any fuss. No one will find my body and no one will care about it. You need not think it necessary to notify the newspapers—what I'm sending you here is literature and not journalism. I have no earthly belongings left except these MSS., upon which you will have to pay the toll. I have written to M——, a man who once did some typewriting for me, asking him to use a dollar he owes me in putting a notice in one of the papers. I suppose I owe that to the people out West.

I can't write you to-night—before God I can't; my head is going like a steel-mill, and I'm *so* sick. You will get over this somehow, and go on and do your task and win. And if the memory of my prayer can help you, that will be something. Do the work of both of us if you can. Only, if you do pull through, remember my last cry—remember the young artist! There is no other fight so worth fighting—take it upon you—shout it day and night at them—what things they do with their young artists!

God bless you, dear friend. Yours,                      ARTHUR.

The above is the only tidings of him, excepting the extended accounts of his death which appeared in the New York Times and the New York World for June 10 and 11, 1902, and several letters which he wrote to other people. There remains only to say a few words as to the journal.

It is scrawled upon old note-books and loose sheets of paper. The matter, although a diary, contains odd bits of his writings—one



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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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of two letters to me which he had me send back, and some extracts from an essay which a friend of mine was offering at that time to magazines in the hope of placing it for him. There is a problem about the work which I leave to others to solve—how much of it was written as dated, and how much afterward, as a piece of art, as a testament of his sorrow. Parts of it have struck me as having been composed in the latter way, and the last pages, of course, imply as much.

Extraordinary pages they are to me. That a man who was about to take his life should have written them is one of the strangest cases of artistic absorption I know of in literature. But Arthur Stirling was a man lost in his art just so—so full of it, so drunk with it, that nothing in life had other meaning to him. To quote the words he loved, from the last of his heroes, he longed for excellence “as the lion longs for his food.”

So he lived and so he worked; the world had no use for his work, and so he died.

S.

NEW YORK, *November 15, 1902.*



READER :

I DO not know if "The Valley of the Shadow" means to you what it means to me; I do not know if it means anything at all to you. But I have sought long and far for these words, to utter an all but unutterable thought.

When you walk in the forest you do not count the lives that you tread into nothingness. When you rejoice with the springtime you do not hear the cries of the young things that are choked and beaten down and dying. When you watch the wild thing in your snare you do not know the meaning of the torn limbs, and the throbbing heart, and the awful silence of the creature trapped. When you go where the poor live, and see thin faces and hungry eyes and crouching limbs, you do not think of these things either.

But I, reader—I dwell in the Valley of the Shadow.

Sometimes it is silent in my Valley, and the creatures sit in terror of their own voices; some-

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times there are screams that pierce the sky; but there is never any answer in my Valley. There are quivering hands there, and racked limbs, and aching hearts, and panting souls. There is gasping struggle, glaring failure—maniac despair. For over my Valley rolls *The Shadow*, a giant thing, moving with the weight of mountains. And you stare at it, you feel it; you scream, you pray, you weep; you hold up your hands to your God, you grow mad; but the Shadow moves like Time, like the sun, and the planets in the sky. It rolls over you, and it rolls on; and then you cry out no more.

It is that way in my Valley. The Shadow is the Shadow of Death.

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PART I

WRITING A POEM





## PART I

### WRITING A POEM

THE book! The book! This day, Saturday, the sixth day of April, 1901, I begin the book!

I have never kept a journal—I have been too busy living; but to-day I begin a journal. I am so built that I can do but one thing at a time. Now that I have begun *The Captive*, I must be haunted with it all day; when I am not writing it I must be dreaming it, or restless because I am not. Therefore it occurred to me that in the hours of weariness I would write about it what was in my mind—what fears and what hopes; why and how I write it will be a story in itself, and some day I think it will be read.

I have come to the last stage of the fight, and I see the goal. I will tell the story, and by and by wise editors can print it in the Appendix!

Yesterday I was a cable-car conductor, and to-day I am a poet!

## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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I know of some immortal poems that were written by a druggist's clerk, and some by a gager of liquid barrels, but none by a cable-car conductor. "It sounds interesting, tell us about it!" says the reader. I shall, but not to-day.

To-day I begin the book!

I did not write that on April 6th, I wrote it a month ago—one day when I was thinking about this. I put it there now, because it will do to begin; but I had no jests in my heart on April 6th.

April 10th.

I have been for four days in a kind of frenzy. I have come down like a collapsed balloon, and I think I have had enough for once.

I have written the opening scene, but not finally; and then I got into the middle—I could not help it. How in God's name I am ever to do this fearful thing, I don't know; it frightens me, and sometimes I lose all heart.

I suppose I shall have to begin again to-night. I must eat something first, though. That is one of my handicaps: I wear myself out and have to stop and eat. Will anybody ever love me for this work, will anybody ever understand it?

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## WRITING A POEM

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I suppose I can get back where I was yesterday, but always it grows harder, and more stern. I set my teeth together.

It was like the bursting of an overstrained dam, these last four days. How long I have been pent up—eighteen months! And eighteen months seems like a lifetime to me. I have been a bloodhound in the leash, hungering—hungering for this thing, and the longing has piled up in me day by day. Sometimes it has been more than I could bear; and when the time was near, I was so wild that I was sick. The book! The book! Freedom and the book!

And last Saturday I went out of the hell-house where I have been pent so long, and I covered my face with my hands and fled away home—away to the little corner that is mine. There I flung myself down and sobbed like a child. It was relief—it was joy—it was fear! It was everything! The book! The book! Then I got up—and the world seemed to go behind me, and I was drunk. I heard a voice calling—it thundered in my ears—that I was free—that my hour was come—that I might live—that I might live—live! And I could have shouted it—I

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know that I laughed it aloud. Every time I thought the thought it was like the throbbing of wings to me—"Free! Free!"

No one can understand this—no one who has not a demon in his soul. No one who does not know how I have been choked—what horrors I have borne.

I am through with that—I did not think of that. I am free! They will never have me back.

That motive alone would drive me to my work, would make me dare *anything*. But I do not need that motive.

I think only of the book. I thought of it last Saturday, and it swept me away out of myself. I had planned the opening scene; but then the thought of the triumph-song took hold of me, and it drove me mad. That song was what I had thought I could never do—I had never dared to think of it. And it came to me—it came! Wild, incoherent, overwhelming, it came, the victorious hymn. I could not think of remembering it; it was not poetry—it was reality. *I was the Captive, I had won freedom—a faith and a vision!*

— So it throbbed on and on, and I was choked,

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## WRITING A POEM

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and my head on fire, and my hands tingling, until I sank down from sheer exhaustion—laughing and sobbing, and talking to God as if He were in the room. I never really believe in God except at such times; I can go through this dreadful world for months, and never think if there be a God.—Here I sit gossiping about it.—But I am tired out.

The writing of a book is like the bearing of a child. But every birth-pang of the former lasts for hours; and it is months before the labor is done.

It is not merely the vision, the hour of exultation; that is but the setting of the task. Now you will take that ecstasy, and hold on to it, hold on with soul and body; you will keep yourself at that height, you will hold that flaming glory before your eyes, and you will hammer it into words. Yes, that is the terror—into words—into words that leap the hilltops, that bring the ends of existence together in a lightning flash. You will take them as they come, white-hot, in wild tumult, and you will forge them, and force them. You will seize them in your naked hands and wrestle with them, and bend

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them to your will—all that is the making of a poem. And last and worst of all, you will hold them in your memory, the long, long surge of them; the torrent of whirling thought—you will hold it in your memory! You are dazed with excitement, exhausted with your toil, trembling with pain; but you have built a tower out of cards, and you have mounted to the clouds upon it, and there you are poised. And anything that happens—anything!—Ah, God, why can the poet not escape from his senses?—a sound, a touch—and it is gone!

These things drive you mad.—

But meanwhile it is not gone yet. You have still a whole scene in your consciousness—as if you were a juggler, tossing a score of golden balls. And all the time, while you work, you learn it—you learn it! It is endless, but you learn it. In the midst of it, perhaps, you come down of sheer exhaustion; and you lie there, panting, shuddering, your hands moist; you dare not think, you wait. And then by and by you begin again—if it will not come, you *make* it come, you lash yourself like a dumb beast—up, up, to the mountain-tops again. And then once more the thing comes back—you live the scene again, as



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## WRITING A POEM

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an actor does, and you shape it and you master it. And now in the midst of it, you find this highest of all moments is gone! It is gone, and you can not find it! Those words that came as a trumpet-clash, burning your very flesh—that melody that melted your whole being to tears—they are gone—you can not find them! You search and you search—but you can not find them. And so you stumble on, in despair and agony; and still you dare not rest. You dare not ever rest in this until the thing is done—done and over—until you have *nailed* it fast. So you go back again, though perhaps you are so tired that you are fainting; but you fight yourself like a madman, you struggle until you feel a thing at your heart like a wild beast; and you keep on, you hold it fast and learn it, clinch it tight, and make it yours forever. I have done that same thing five times to-day without a rest; and toiled for five hours in that frenzy; and then lain down upon the ground, with my head on fire.

Afterward when you have recovered you sit down, and for two or three hours you write; you have it whole in your memory now—you have but to put it down. And this forlorn, wet, be-

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dragged thing—this miserable, stammering, cringing thing—*this* is your poem!

Some day the world will realize these things, and then they will present their poor poets with diamonds and palaces, and other things that do not help.

I wrote this, and then I leaned back, tired out. My thoughts turned to Shakespeare, and while I was thinking of him—

But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill!

April 11th.

I have not done much to-day. I spent the morning brooding over the opening speech. It is somber and terrible, but I have not gotten it right. It must have a tread—a tread like an orchestra! Ah, how I wish I had an orchestra!—I would soon do it then—“*So bist nun ewig du verdammt!*”

The secret of the thing is iteration. I must find a word that is like a hammer-stroke. I have tried twenty, but I have not found the one.

—I spent the rest of the day thinking over the whole first act, mapping it out, so to speak.



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## WRITING A POEM

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I have often fancied a resemblance between The Captive and the C-minor symphony; I wonder if any one else would have thought of it. It is not merely the opening—it is the whole content of the thing—the struggle of a prisoned spirit. I would call The Captive a symphony, and print the C-minor themes in it, only it would seem fanciful.—But it would not really be fanciful to put the second theme opposite the thought of freedom—of the blue sky and the dawning spring.

All except the scherzo. I couldn't find room for the scherzo. Men who have wrestled with the demons of hell do not tumble around like elephants, no matter how happy they are. I wish I could take out Beethoven's scherzos!

My heart leaps when I think of my one big step. I have put those pages away—I shall not look at them again for a month. Then I can judge them.

April 13th.

A cable-car conductor and a poet! I think that will be a story worth telling.

I have tried many and various occupations, but I have not found one so favorable to the study of poetry as my last. I should have made

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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out very well—if I had not been haunted by The Captive.

With everything else you do you are more or less hampered by having to sell your brain; and also by having to obey some one. But a cable-car is an unlimited monarchy; and all you have to do is to collect fares and pull the bell, both of which duties are quite mechanical. And besides that you receive princely wages—and can live off one-third of them, if you know how; and that means that you need only work one-third of the time, and can write your poetry the rest of it!

This sounds like jesting, but it is not. I have only been a cable-car conductor six months, but in that time I have taught myself to read Greek with more than fluency. All you need is good health and spirits, a will of iron, and a very tiny note-book in the palm of your hand, full of the words you wish to learn. And then for ten or twelve hours a day you go about running a car with your body—and with your mind—hammering, hammering! It is excellent discipline—it is fighting all day, "*Pous, podos*, the foot—*pous, podos*, the foot—34th Street, Crosstown East and West—*pous, podos*, the foot!"

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## WRITING A POEM

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And then when you get home late at night,  
are there not the great masters who love you?

April 15th.

Thou wouldst call thyself Artist; thou  
wouldst have the Eternal Presence to dwell with-  
in thee, to fire thy heart with passion and dower  
thy lips with song; canst thou go into thy closet,  
and alone with thy Maker, say these words:

“O Thou Unthinkable, source of all light  
and life, Thou the great unselfish One, the great  
Sufferer; Thou seest my heart this day, how in it  
dwells but love of Thy truth and worship of Thy  
holiness. Thou seest that I seek not wealth that  
men should serve me, nor fame that they should  
honor me, for the glory that is Thine. Thou seest  
that I bring all my praise to Thy feet, that I love  
all things that Thou hast made, that I envy no  
man Thy gifts, that I rejoice when Thou sendest  
one stronger than I into the battle. And when  
these things are not, may Thy power leave me;  
for I seek but to dwell in Thy presence, and to  
speak Thy truth, which can not die.”

That prayer welled up in my heart to-day.  
There are times when I sit before this thing in

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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my soul, crouching and gazing at it in fear. Then I see the naked horror of it, the shuddering reality of it. I see the Soul: motionless, tense, quivering, wrestling in an agony with the powers of destruction. It is so real to me that my body stiffens into stone, and I sit with the sweat on my forehead. That happened to me to-day, and I wrote a few lines of the poem that made my voice break—the passionate despairing cry for deliverance, for rest from the terror.

But there is no rest. The mountain slope is so that there is no standing upon it, and once you stop, it breaks your heart to begin again. And so you go on—up—up—and there is not any summit.

It is that way when you write a book; and that way when you make a symphony; and that way when you wage a war.

But my soul hungered for it. I have loved the great elemental art-works—the art-works that were born of pure suffering. For months before I began *The Captive* I read but three books—read them and brooded over them, all day and all night. They were Prometheus

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## WRITING A POEM

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Bound, Prometheus Unbound, and Samson Agonistes.

You sit with these books, and time and space  
“to nothingness do sink.” There looms up before you—like a bare mountain in its majesty—the great elemental world-fact, the death-grapple of the will with circumstance. You may build yourself any philosophy or any creed you please, but you will never get away from the world-fact—the death-grapple of the soul with circumstance. Æschylus has one creed, and Milton has another, and Shelley has a third; but always it is the death-grapple. Chaos, evil—circumstance—lies about you, binds you; and you grip it—you close with it—all your days you toil with it, you shape it into systems, you make it live and laugh and sing. And while you do that, there is in your heart a thing that is joy and pain and terror mingled in one passion.

Who knows that passion? Who knows—

“With travail and heavy sorrow  
The holy spirit of Man.”

Prometheus Bound, Prometheus Unbound, and Samson Agonistes! And now there will be a fourth. It will be The Captive.

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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Am I a fool? I do not know—that is none of my business. It is my business to do my best.

Horace bids you, if you would make him weep, to weep first yourself. I understand by the writing of a poem just this: that the problem you put there you discover for yourself; that the form you put it in you invent for yourself; and, finally, that what you make it, from the first word to the last word, from the lowest moment to the highest moment, you *live*; that when a character in such a place acts thus, he acts thus because you, in that place—not would have acted thus, but *did* act thus; that the words which are spoken in that moment of emotion are spoken because you, in that moment of emotion—not would have spoken them, but *did* speak them. I propose that you search out the scenes that have stirred the hearts of men in all times, and see if you can find one that was written thus—not because the author had lived it thus, but because somebody else had lived it thus, or because he wanted people to think he had lived it thus.

And now you are writing *The Captive*. You do not go into the dungeon in the body, because



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## WRITING A POEM

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you need all your strength; but in the spirit you have gone into the dungeon, and the door has clanged, and it is black night—the world is gone forever. And there you sit, while the years roll by, and you front the naked fact. Six feet square of stone and an iron chain are your portion—that is circumstance; and the will—you are the will. And you grip it—you close with it—all your days you toil with it; you shape it into systems, make it live and laugh and sing. And while you do that there is in your heart a thing that is joy and pain and terror mingled in one passion.

Yes, sometimes I shrink from it; but I will do it—meaning what those words mean. I will fight that fight, I will live that life—to the last gasp; and it shall go forth into the world a living thing, a new well-spring of life.

It shall be—I don't know what you call the thing, but when you have hauled your load half-way up the hill you put a block in the way to keep it from sliding back. That same thing has to be done to society.

Man will never get behind the Declaration of Independence again, nor behind the writings of Voltaire again. We let Catholicism run around

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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loose now, but that is because Voltaire cut its claws and pulled out all its teeth.

April 16th.

I was thinking to-day, that The Captive would be an interesting document to students of style. Read it, and make up your mind about it; then I will tell you—the first line of it is almost the first line of blank verse I ever wrote in my life.

I have read about the French artists, the great masters of style, and how they give ten years of their lives to writing things that are never published. But I have noticed that when they are masters at last, and when they do begin to publish—they very seldom have anything to say that I care in the least to hear.

—My soul is centered upon *the thing!*

Let it be a test.

I am trying to be an artist; but I have never been able to study style. I believe that the style of this great writer came from what he had to say. You think about how he said it; but he thought about what he was saying.

It seemed strange to me when I thought of it. With all my trembling eagerness, with all my



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## WRITING A POEM

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preparation, such an idea as "practise" never came to me. How could I cut the path until I had come to the forest?

All my soul has been centered upon *living*. Since this book first took hold of me—eighteen months ago—I could not tell with what terrible intensity I have lived it. They said to me, "You are a poet; why don't you write verses for the magazines?" But I was not a writer of verses for the magazines.

It has been a shrine that I have kept in the corner of my heart, and tended there. I have never gone near it, except upon my knees. There were days when I did not go near it at all, when I was weak, or distraught. But I knew that every day I was closer to the task, that every day my heart was more full of it. It was like wild music—it came to a climax that swept me away in spite of myself.

To get the mastery of your soul, to hold it here, in your hands, at your bidding, to consecrate your life to that, to watch and pray and toil for that, to rouse yourself and goad yourself day and night for that; to thrill with the memory of great consecrations, of heroic sufferings and aspirations; to have the power of the stars in

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your heart, of nature, of history and the soul of man; *that* is your “practise.”

April 17th.

It is true that my whole life has been a practise for the writing of this book, that this book is the climax of my whole life. I have toiled—learned—built up a mind—found a conviction; but I have never written anything, or tried to write anything, to be published. I have said, “Wait; it is not time.” And now it *is* time. If there is anything of use in all that I have done, it is in this book.

Yes; and also it is a climax in another way. It is my goal and my salvation.—Ah, how I have toiled for it!

April 19th.

I saw my soul to-day. It was a bubble, blown large, palpitating, whirling over a stormy sea; glorious with the rainbow hues it was, but perilous, abandoned.—Do you catch the *feeling* of my soul?

Something perilous—I do not much care what. A traveler scaling the mountains, leaping upon dizzy heights; a gambler staking his fortune, his freedom, his life—upon a cast!

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## WRITING A POEM

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I will tell you about it.

It began when I was fifteen. My great-uncle, my guardian, is a wholesale grocer in Chicago; he has a large palace and a large waistcoat.

"Will you be a wholesale grocer?" said he.

"No," said I, "I will not."

I might have been a partner by this time, had I said Yes, and had a palace and a large waistcoat too.

"Then what will you be?" asked the great-uncle.

"I will be a poet," said I.

"You mean you will be a loafer?" said he.

"Yes," said I—disliking argument—"I will be a loafer."

And so I went away, and while I went I was thinking, far down in my soul. And I said: "It must be everything or nothing; either I am a poet or I am not. I will act as if I were; I will burn my bridges behind me. If I am, I will win—for you can not kill a poet; and if I am not, I will die."

Thus is it perilous.

I fight the fight with all my soul; I give every ounce of my strength, my will, my hope, to the making of myself a poet. And when the time

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comes I write my poem. Then if I win, I win empires; and if I lose—

“You put all your eggs into one basket,” some one once said to me.

“Yes,” I replied, “I put all my eggs into one basket—and then I carry the basket myself.”

Now I have come to the last stage of the journey—the “one fight more, and the last.” And can I give any idea of what is back of me, to nerve me to that fight? I will try to tell you.

For seven years I have borne poverty and meanness, sickness, heat, cold, toil—that I might make myself an artist. The indignities, the degradations—I could not tell them, if I spent all the time I have in writing a journal. I have lived in garrets—among dirty people—vulgar people—vile people; I have worn rags and unclean things; I have lived upon bread and water and things that I have cooked myself; I have seen my time and my strength wasted by a thousand hateful impertinences—I have been driven half mad with pain and rage; I have gone without friends—I have been hated by every one; I have worked at all kinds of vile drudgery—or starved myself sick that I might avoid working.

But I have said, “I will be an artist!”

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## WRITING A POEM

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Day and night I have dreamed it; day and night I have fought for it. I have plotted and planned—I have plotted to save a minute. I have done menial work that I might have my brain free—all the languages that I know I have worked at at such times. I have calculated the cost of foods—I have lived on a third of the pittance I earned, that I might save two-thirds of my time. I once washed dishes in a filthy restaurant because that took only two or three hours a day.

I have said, “I will be an artist! I will fix my eyes upon the goal; I will watch and wait, and fight the fight day by day. And when at last I am strong, and when my message is ripe, I will earn myself a free chance, and then I will write a book. All the yearning, all the agony of this my life I will put into it; every hour of trial, every burst of rage. I will make it the hope of my life, I will write it with my blood—give every ounce of strength that I have and every dollar that I own; and I will win—I will win!

“So I will be free, and the horror will be over.”

I have done that—I am doing that now. I mean to finish it if it kills me.—

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But I was sitting on the edge of the bed to-night, and the tears came into my eyes and I whispered: "But oh, you must not ask me to do any more! I can not do any more! It will leave me broken!"

Only so much weight can a man carry. The next pound breaks his back.

April 22d.

I am happy to-night; I am a little bit drunk.

To-day was one day in fifty. Why should it be? Sometimes I have but to spread my wings to the wind. Yesterday I might have torn my hair out, and that glory would not have come to me. But to-day I was filled with it—it lived in me and burned in me—I had but to go on and go on.

The Captive! It was the burst of rage—the first glow in the ashes of despair. I was walking up and down the room for an hour, thundering it to myself. I have not gotten over the joy of it yet: "*Thou in thy mailed insolence!*"

I wonder if any one who reads those thirty lines will realize that they meant eight hours of furious toil on my part!

Stone by stone I build it.

The whole possibility of a scene—that is what



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## WRITING A POEM

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I pant for, always; that it should be all there, and yet not a line to spare; compact, solid, each phrase coming like a blow; and above all else, that it should be inevitable! When you stand upon the height of your being, and behold the thing with all your faculties—the thing and the phrase are one, and one to all eternity.

April 24th.

I was looking at a literary journal to-day. Oh, my soul, it frightens me! All these libraries of books—who reads them, what are they for? And each one of them a hope! And I am to leap over them all—I—I? I dare not think about it.

I have been helpless to-day. I can not find what I want—I struggled for hours, I wore myself out with struggling. And I have torn up what I wrote.

Blank verse is such a—such a thing not to be spoken of! Is there anything worse, except it be a sonnet? How many miles of it are ground out every day—sometimes that kind comes to me to mock me—I could have written a whole poem full of it this afternoon. If there are two lines of that sort in *The Captive*, I'll burn it all.

An awful doubt came to me besides. Some-

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body had sown it long ago, and it sprouted to-day. "Yes, but will it be *interesting*?"

Heaven help me, how am I to know if it will be interesting? The question made me shudder; I have never thought anything about making it interesting—I've been trying to make it true. Can it possibly be that the ecstasy of one soul, the reality of one soul, the quivering, exulting life of it—will not interest any other soul?

"How can you know that what you are doing is real, anyhow?" The devil would plague me to death to-day. "But how many millions write poems and think they are wonderful!"

—I do not believe in my soul to-day, because I have none.

April 25th.

Would you like to know where I am, and how I am doing all these things? I am in a lodging-house. I have one of three hall rooms in a kind of top half-story. There is room for me to take four steps; so it is that I "walk up and down" when I am excited. I have tried—I have not kept count of how many places—and this is the quietest. The landlady's husband has a carpenter shop down-stairs, but he is always drunk and doesn't work; it has also been providentially



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## WRITING A POEM

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arranged that the daughter, who sings, is sick for some time. Next door to me there is a man who plays the 'cello in a dance hall until I know not what hour of the night. He keeps his 'cello at the dance hall. Next to him is a pale woman who sits and sews all day and waits for her drunken husband to come home. In front there is some kind of foolish girl who leaves her door open in the hope that I'll look in at her, and a couple of inoffensive people not worth describing.

I get up—I never know the time in the morning; and sometimes I lie without moving for hours—thinking—thinking. Or sometimes I go out and roam around the streets; or sit perfectly motionless, gazing at the wall. When it will not come, I make it. I breakfast on bread and milk, and I eat bread and milk at all hours of the day when I am hungry. For dinner I cook a piece of meat on a little oil-stove, and for supper I eat bread and milk. The rest of the time I am sitting on the floor by the window, writing; or perhaps kneeling by the bed with my head buried in my arms, and thinking until the room reels. When I am not doing that I wander around like a lost soul; I can not think of anything else.—Sometimes when I am tired and

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must rest, I force myself to sit down and write some of this.

I have just forty dollars now. It costs me three dollars a week, not including paper and typewriting. Thus I have ten or twelve weeks in which to finish *The Captive*—that many and no more.

If I am not finished by that time it will kill me; to try to work and earn money in the state that I am in just at present would turn me into a maniac—I should kill some one, I know.

I am quivering with nervous tension—every faculty strained to breaking; the buzz of a fly is a roar to me. I build up these towering castles of emotion in my soul, castles that shimmer in the sunlight:

Banners yellow, glorious, golden !

And then something happens, and they fall upon me with the weight of mountains.

Ten weeks! And yet it is not that which goads me most.

✓ What goads me most is that I am a captive in a dungeon, and am fighting for the life of my soul.

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## WRITING A POEM

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I shall win, I do not fear—the fountains of my being will not fail me. I saw my soul a second time to-day; it was no longer the bubble, blown large, palpitating. It was a bird resting upon a bough. The bough was tossed and flung about by a tempest; and a chasm yawned below; but the bough held, and the bird was master of its wings, and sang.

The name of the bough was Faith.

April 27th.

I have read a great deal of historical romance, and a great deal of local color fiction, and a great deal of original character-drawing—and I have wished to get away from these things.

There is no local color, and no character-drawing, in *The Captive*. You do not know the name of the hero; you do not know how old he is, or of what rank he is, at what period or in what land he lives. He is described but once. He is "A Man."

My philosophy is a philosophy of will. All virtue that I know is conditioned upon freedom. The object of all thinking and doing, as I see it, is to set men free.

There is the tyranny of kings—the tyranny

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of force; there is the tyranny of priests—the tyranny of ignorance; there is the tyranny of society—the tyranny of selfishness and indolence; and above all, and including all, and causing all—there is the tyranny of self—the tyranny of sin, the tyranny of the body. So it is that I see the world.

So it is that I see history; I can see nothing else in history. The tyranny of kings and nobles, the tyranny of the mass and the inquisition, the tyranny of battle and murder and crime—how was a man to live in those ages?

How is a man to live in *this* age? The tyranny of kings and of priests is gone, and from the tyranny of industrialism the individual can escape. But the lightning—is not that an inquisition? And if it comes after you, will it not find out all your secrets? And the tyranny of hurricane and shipwreck, of accident, disease, and death? Any tyranny is all tyranny, I say; and the existence of tyranny is its presence.

It is conceivable that some day the sovereign mind may shake off its shackles, and the tyranny of matter be at an end. But that day is not yet; and meanwhile, the thing existing, how shall a

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## WRITING A POEM

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man be free? That has been the matter of my deepest brooding.

This much I have learned:

The man may accept this life, if it please him, and its chances; but while he does he can never be a soul. So long as he accepts this life and its chances, he is the slave of tyranny. When the day comes that mind is sovereign, I will give myself into the hands of this life. But meanwhile I will know myself for what I am—a bubble upon the surface of a whirling torrent, an insect borne aloft upon a flying wheel.

It is by your will that you are free; by your will you are one with the infinite freedom, by your will you are master of time and your fate, lord of the stars and the endless ages, thinker of all truth, hearer of all music, beholder of all beauty, doer of all righteousness. That is the truth which I have brought out of my deepest brooding.

So long as your happiness is in anything about yourself—your wealth, or your fame, or your life—you are not free. So long as your happiness is in houses and lands, in sons and in daughters, you are not free. You give one atom



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of your soul to these things at your own peril; for when your hour comes you tear them from you, though they be as your eyes; and by your *will* you save your soul alive.

Therefore I write *The Captive*. I put aside childish things—I grip my hands upon naked Reality.

There are nine characters in *The Captive*: a tyrant, two slaves, six guests, and a man. There are two scenes—a dungeon, and a banquet-hall.

A tyrant: I understand by a tyrant a man whose happiness is the unhappiness of others. I read of the discoverers of Mexico, and how they found a pyramid of human skulls, raised as a monument; that has been to me, ever since, the type of tyranny. The forms of tyranny vary through the ages, but the principle is always the same; a tyrant is a man who is made great by the toil and sorrow of others.

The slave also remains the same through all time; and likewise the guest. The guest is the man who takes the world as he finds it, and likes a good dinner. The population of society is made up of tyrants, slaves, and guests.

The man is a character of my own imagining.

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## WRITING A POEM

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The first scene of *The Captive* is the dungeon. When I was very young I was in Europe, and I was in a dungeon; I have never forgotten it. There enter the tyrant and the two slaves with the man. They chain him to the wall, and then the tyrant speaks. That first speech—I have written it now—I have gotten the hammer-thuds! Tyranny is an iron thing—you had to feel the tread of it, the words had to roll like thunder. It is an advantage to me that I am full of Wagner; I always hear the music with my poetry. (I shall be disappointed if some one does not make an opera out of *The Captive*.)

The man is there, and he is there forever. After that, once a day, bread and water are shoved in through an opening. But the door of the dungeon does not open again until the last act—when ten years have passed.

That is all. And now the man will battle with that problem. Will he go mad with despair? Will he sink into a wild beast? Will he commit suicide? Or what *will* he do? Day by day he sinks back from the question, numb with agony; day by day the grim hand of Fate drags him to



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it; and so, until from the chaos of his soul he digs out, blow by blow, a faith.

Here there will be Reality; no shams and no lies will do here—here is iron necessity, and cries out for iron truth. God—duty—will—virtue—let such things no more be names, let us see what they *are!*

These are awful words. Sometimes I shrink from this thing as from fire, sometimes I rush to it with a song; I am writing about it now because I am worn out, and yet I can not think of anything else.

This man will find the truth; being delivered from the captivity of the world and set free to be a soul. Superstition blinds him; doubt and despair and weakness blind him; but still he gropes and strives, cries out and battles for truth; until at last, shut up in his own being, he tears his way out to the very source of it, and knows for himself what it is. *Infinite it is, and unthinkable; glorious, all-consuming, all-sufficing; food and drink, friendship and love, ambition and victory, joy, power, and eternity it is to him who finds it; and all things in this world are nothing to him who finds it.*

And so comes the victory to this soul. Hour

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## WRITING A POEM

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by hour he catches gleams of the light; day by day he toils toward it, with fear and agony and prayer; until at last he knows his salvation—to rest never, and to toil always, and to dwell in this Presence of his God. In one desperate hour he flings away the world and the hope of the world, and vows this consecration, and lives.

He keeps the vow; it is iron necessity that drives him. He finds himself, he finds his way—each day his step is surer.

Each day the channels of his being deepen. He lays broad plans for his life—he gathers all knowledge, he solves all problems; lord of the infinite mind, he ranges all existence, and beholds it as the symbol of himself. Into the deeps and yawning spaces of it he plunges; blind, he sees what men have never seen; deaf, he hears what men have never heard—singer he is, prophet and poet and maker. New worlds leap into being in the infinite fulness of his heart, visions of endless glory that make his senses reel; as a column of incense towering to the sky is the ecstasy of his adoration and his joy.

And so the long years roll by; and the un-

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conquered spirit has left the earth: left time and space and self, and dwells where never man has dwelt before. And then one day the door of the dungeon is opened, and his chains are shattered, and the slaves lead him up to the light of day.

It is the banquet-hall; and there is the tyrant, and there the guests—there is the world.

He is aged, and weak, and white, and terrible. They stare at him; and he stares at them, for he is dazed. They begin to mock at him, and then at last he realizes, and he covers his face and weeps—beholding the world, and the way that it must come. They jeer at him, they strike him; and when he answers not, they call to the slaves to torture him.

This man has lived for ten years with *himself*. He is nothing but a will. And now they will conquer him!

I recall the highest moment of my being. I saw that moment, and all the others of my life. I saw them as something that I could not bear to see, and I cried out that from that hour I would

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change them. I have not kept the vow; there was no one to drive me.

But this man they drive; they pinch him and burn him and tear him; they crush his limbs, they break his bones, they grind his flesh, they make his brain a living fire of anguish. And he fights them.

Into the deep recesses of his being goes the cry—for all that he has—for all that he is! For every ounce of his strength, for every throb of his will, for every vision, every truth that he knows! To bear this, to save him here! And so he wrestles, so he rises, so he gropes and gasps; and in the moment of his fiercest straining, with the throb of all his being he bursts the barrier, he rends the veil; and infinite passion rolls in in floods upon him, he clutches all existence in his arms; and from his lips there bursts a mad frenzied shout of rapture—that makes his torturers stand transfixed, listening, trembling with terror.

And so they drag him back to his dungeon; and there, unable to move, he lies upon the stones and pants out his ecstasy and his life.

That is The Captive.

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April 29th.

What counts in this thing is momentum—spiritual momentum. You are filled with it all the time, it never leaves you; it drives behind you like a gale of wind; it roars in your ears when you are awake, it rocks you to sleep when you are weary; whenever you are dull or do not heed it, it nags at you, it goads you, it beats into your face. Each day it is more, each day it is harder, more unattainable; but only do not stop, it carries you with it like a wave; you mount upon each day's achievement to reach the next, you move with the power of all the days before. It is momentum that counts.

Do not stop!—I cry it all day—Do not stop!

April 30th.

It is weak of me, but sometimes I can not help but look ahead—and think that it is done! I could not find any words to tell the joy that that will be to me—to be free, after so long—to be free!

I do not care anything about the fame—it would not be anything to me to be a great author. If it could be done, nothing would please me better than to publish it anonymously—to let no one

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## WRITING A POEM

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ever know that it was mine. If I could only have the little that I need to be free, I would publish all that I might ever write anonymously.

Yes, that is the thing that makes my blood bound. To be free! Let it only be done—let it only be real, as it will be—and the naked force of it will shake men to the depths of their souls. I could not write it, if I did not believe that I was writing words that would grip the soul of any man—I care not how dull or how coarse he might be.

I finished the first act just now.

May 1st.

I am wild to-day. Oh, how can I bear this—why should I have to contend with such things as this! Is it not hard enough—the agony that I have to bear, the task that takes all my strength and more? And must I be torn to pieces by such hideous degradation as this? Oh, my God, if my life is not soon clear of these things I shall die!

Oh, it is funny—yes, funny!—Let us laugh at it. The dance-hall musician has brought home his 'cello! I heard him come bumping up the



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stairs with it—God damn his soul! And there he sits, sawing away at some loathsome jig tunes! And he has two friends in there—I listen to their wit between the tunes.

Here I sit, like a wild beast pent in a cage. I tell you I can bear any work in the world, but I can not bear things such as this. That I, who am seeking a new faith for men—who am writing, or trying to write, what will mean new life to millions—should have my soul ripped into pieces by such loathsome, insulting indignities!

Oh, laugh!—but *I* can't laugh—I sit here foaming at the lips, and crying! And suppose he's lost his position, and does this every day!

Now every day I must lay aside what I am doing and sit and shudder when I hear him coming up the steps—and wait for him to begin this! I tell you, I demand to be free—I *demand* it! I want nothing in this world but to be let alone. I don't want anybody to wait on me.—*I don't want anything from this hellish world but to be let alone!*

It is pouring rain outside, and my overcoat is thin; but I must go out and pace the streets and wait until a filthy Dutchman gets through scraping ragtime on a 'cello.



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## WRITING A POEM

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All day wasted! All day! Does it not seem that these things persecute you by system? I came in, cold and wet, and got into bed, and then he began again! And the friends came back and they had beer, and more music. And I had to get up and put on the wet clothes once more.

May 2d.

I was crouching out on one of the docks last night. I had no place else to go. I can think anywhere, if it is quiet.

A wonderful thing is the night. I bless Thee for the night, oh "*süsse, heilige Natur*"!

It was a voice in my soul, as clear as could be.

—She can not bear too long the sight of men, sweet, holy Nature: the swarming hives—the millions of tiny creatures, each drunk and blind with his own selfishness; and so she lays her great hand upon it all, and hides it out of her sight.

Once it was all silent, and formless as the desert; soon it shall all be silent and formless again; and meanwhile—the night, the night!

Oh, I hunger for the desert! I do not care for beauty—I have no time for beauty, I want the

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earth stern and forbidding. Give me some place where no one else would want to go—an iron crag where the oceans beat—a mountain-top where the lightning splinters on the rocks.

I go at it again. But I am nervous—these things get me into such a state that I simply can not do anything. It was not merely yesterday—I have it constantly. The dirty chambermaid singing, or yelling down to the landlady; the drunken man swearing at his wife; the boys screaming in the street and kicking a tomato-can about. When I think of how much beauty and power has been shattered in my life by such things as these, it brings tears of impotent rage into my eyes.

I must be free—oh, I must be free!

It comes strangely from the author of *The Captive*, does it not?

I give all my life to my work, and sometimes, when I am broken like this, I wonder if I do not give too much. Once I climbed to a dizzy height, and I cried out a dizzy truth:

“O God, how as nothing in Thy sight are my writings!”

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## WRITING A POEM

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I do not know if I shall ever reach that height again.

May 3d.

I have not one single beautiful memory in my life. I have nothing in my life that, when I think of it, does not make me *writhe*.

To all that I have lived, and known, and seen, I have but one word, one cry—Away! Away! Let me get away from it! Let me get away from cities, let me get away from men, let me out of my cage! Let me go with my God, let me forget it all—put it away forever and ever! Let me no longer have to plot and plan, to cringe and whimper, to barter my vision and my hours for bread!

Who knows what I suffer—who has any idea of it? To have a soul like a burning fire, to be hungry and swift as the Autumn wind, to have a heart as hot as the wild bird's, and wings as eager—and to be chained here in this seething hell of selfishness, this orgy of folly.

Ah, and then I shut my hands together. No, I am not weak, I do not spend my time chafing thus! I have fought it out so far—

“I was ever a fighter, so one fight more!”

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I will go back, and I will hammer and hammer again—grimly—savagely—day by day. And out of the furnace of my soul I will forge a weapon that will set me free in the end—I think.

May 4th.

I wrote a little poem once. I remembered two lines of it—a nature description; they were not great lines, but there flashed over me to-day an application of them that was a stroke of genius, I believe. I was passing the Stock Exchange. It was a very busy day. I climbed one of the pillars, in spirit, and wrote high above the portals:

Where savage beasts through forest midnight roam,  
Seeking in sorrow for each other's joy.

May 5th.

A dreadful thing is unbelief! A dreadful thing it is to be an infidel!

—That is what all men cry nowadays—there is so much infidelity in the world—it is the curse of our modern society—it is everywhere—it is all-prevailing!

I had a strange experience to-day, Sunday. I went into a church, and high up by the altar, dressed in solemn garb and offering prayers to God—I saw an infidel!

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## WRITING A POEM

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He preached a sermon. The theme of his sermon was "Liberalism."

"These men," cried the preacher, "are blinding our eyes to our salvation, they are undermining, day by day, our faith! They tell us that the sacred word of God is 'literature'! And they show us more 'literature'; but oh, my friends, what new *Bible* have they shown us!"

As I got up and went out of that church, I whispered: "What a dreadful thing it is to be an infidel!"

Oh Dante and Goethe and Shakespeare—oh Wordsworth and Shelley and Emerson! Oh thrice-anointed and holy spirits! What a dreadful thing it is to be an infidel!

What a dreadful thing it is to believe in a Bible, and not to believe in literature—to believe in a Bible and not to believe in a God!

You think that this world lives upon the revelation of two thousand years ago! Fool—this world lives as your body lives by the beating of its heart—upon the revelation and the effort of each instant of its life. And to-day or to-morrow the great Revealer might send to some lonely thinker in his garret a new

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word that would scatter to dust and ashes all laws and all duties that now are known to men.

There are many ways to look at the world, and always a deeper one. I see it as a fearful thing, towering, expanding, upheld by the toil and the agony of millions. Who will bring us the new hope, the new song of courage, that it go not down into the dust to-day?

To do that there is the poet; to live and to die unheeded, and to feed for ages upon ages the hungry souls of men—that is to be a poet. Therefore will he sing, and sing ever, and die in the sweetness of his song.

When I think of that—not now as I write it here in bare words—but in quivering reality, it is a hand upon my forehead, and a presence in the room.

May 6th.

Chiefest of all I think of my country! Passionately, more than words can utter, I love this land of mine. If I tear my heart till it bleeds and pour out the tears of my spirit, it is for this consecration and this hope—it is for this land of Washington and Lincoln. There never was any



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## WRITING A POEM

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land like it—there may never be any like it again; and Freedom watches from her mountains, trembling.

—It is a song that it needs, a song and a singer; to point it to its high design, to thrill it with the music of its message, to shake the heart of every man in it, and make him burn and dare! For the first time there is Liberty; for the first time there is Truth, and no shams and no lies, enthroned. The news of it has gone forth like the sound of thunder, and has shaken all the earth: that man at last may live, may do what he can and will!

—And to what is it? Is it to the heaping up of ugly cities, the packing of pork and the gathering of gold? That is the thing that I toil for—to tear this land from the grasp of mean men and of merchants! To take the souls of my countrymen into the high mountains with me, to thrill them with a soaring, strong resolve! *Living things* shall come from this land of mine, living things before I die, for the hunger of it burns me, and will not ever let me rest. Freedom! freedom! And stern justice and honor, and knowledge and power, and a noonday blaze of light!



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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Arise in thy majesty, confronting the ages!  
Stretch out thine arms to the millions that shall be!  
Justice thine inheritance, God thy stay and sustenance,  
My country, to thee!

Those are feeble words. If this were a book,  
I would tear it all up.

I wonder if any one will ever read this. As a matter of fact, I suppose ten people will read gossip about the book for every one who reads the book.

This is just a month from the beginning. A month to-day! Yes—I have done my share, I have done a third of it—a third!

But the end is so much harder!

May 9th.

I have been for two days in the mire. I was disturbed, and then I was sluggish. Oh, the sluggishness of my nature!

If ever I am a great poet, I will have made myself that by the power of my will; that is a fact. I am by nature a great clod—I feel nothing, I care about nothing. I look at the flowers as a cow chewing its cud.—It is only that I *will* to do right.

Sometimes the sight of my dulness drives me wild. Then again I merely gaze at it. I try

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## WRITING A POEM

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time and again to get my mind on my work, and something—anything, provided it is trivial enough—turns me aside. Just now I saw a spider-web, and that made me think of Bruce, and thence I went by way of Walter Scott to Palestine, and when I came to I was writing a song for—who was the minstrel?—to sing outside of the prison of Cœur de Lion.

I go wandering that way—sometimes I sit so for an hour; and then suddenly I leap up with a cry. But I may try all I please—I don't care anything about the work—it doesn't stir me—the verses I think of make me sick. And then I remember that I have only so many weeks more; and what it will mean to fail; and that makes me desperate, but doesn't help.

When I have stopped at some resting-place in the poem, I can get going again. But now I have stopped in the middle of a climax; and the number of times that I have read that last line, trying to find another—Great heavens!

But I can not find another word. I am in despair.

I know perfectly well what I shall do, only I am a coward, and do not do it. I shall stay in

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this state till my rage has heaped itself up enough and breaks through everything at last. And then I shall begin to hammer myself! to swear at myself in a way that would make a longshoreman turn white. And I shall spend perhaps two or three hours—perhaps two or three days—doing that, until I am quite in a white heat; and then—I shall go to my work.

That is the price I pay for being distracted.

May 11th.

I said to myself the day before yesterday—with a kind of a dry sob—"I can't do it! I can't do it!"

Oh how tormented I am by noises—noises! What am I not tormented by? Some days ago I was writing in a frenzy—and the landlady came for her rent. And the horrible creature standing there, talking at me! "So lonely!—don't ever see people! Mrs. Smithers was a-saying—" Oh, damn Mrs. Smithers!

I thought I could never do it—I was really about to give it up. I went out on the street—I roamed about for hours, talking I don't know what nonsense to myself. And then at last I came home, and I knelt down there at the bedside

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## WRITING A POEM

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and said: "Here you stay without anything to eat until you've written ten lines of that poem!"

And that was how I did it. I stayed there, and I prayed. I don't often pray, but that time I prayed like one possessed—I was so lonely and so helpless—and the work was so beautiful. I stayed there for nine blessed hours, and then the clock stopped and I couldn't count after that.

But the day came, and then the ten lines! And so I had my breakfast.

These things leave you weak, but a little less dull.

May 13th.

I have been working with a kind of wild desperation all day to-day. Oh it hurts—it hurts—but I am doing it! Whenever I read some lines of it that are real—whenever some great living phrase flashes over me—then I laugh like a man in the midst of a battle.

I shall be just as a man who has been through a battle; haggard and wild and desperate. Oh, I don't think I shall *ever* have the courage to do it again!

I did not know what it meant! I did not! It was giving myself into the hands of a fiend!

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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All great books will be something different to me after this. Did Shakespeare write thus with the blood of his soul? Or am I weak? Did he ever cry out in pain, as I have?

May 14th.

Another day of raw torture. It is like toiling up a mountain side; and your limbs are of lead. It is like struggling in a nightmare,—that is just what it is like. It is sickening.

But then you dare not stop. It is hard to go on, but it is ten times as hard to start if you stop.

I could hardly stand up this afternoon! but the thing was ringing in my ears—it went on and on—I had to go after it! I was in the seventh heaven—I could see anything, dare anything, do anything. It made no difference how hard—it called to me—on—on! And I said: “Suppose I were to be tortured—could I go then?” And so I went and went.

I haven’t written it down yet; I felt sick. But I know it all.

Oh men—oh my brothers—will you love me for this thing?

May 16th.

I did no writing yesterday or to-day. I have been terribly frightened.

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## WRITING A POEM

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I wrote what I had to write the day before yesterday—I could not help it. But when I stopped my head was literally on fire, and the strangest mad throbbing in it—I stood still in fear, it felt so as if something were going to burst—my head seemed to weigh a ton. I poured cold water over it, but it made no difference—it stayed that way all night and all yesterday.

What am I to do? I dare not think—I took a long walk, and even now I find myself thinking of the book without knowing it. Imagine me sitting on a doorstep and playing for two hours with a kitten!

Why should I be handicapped in such a way as this? I had never thought of such a thing.

I was thinking about *The Captive*—it is my own. Nobody has helped me—I have told not one person of it. Everything in it has come out of my soul.

May 17th.

I feel better to-day, but I hardly know what to do.

Meantime I was happy!—Think of a poet's being happy with city flowers! of a poet's being



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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happy with store-flowers—prostitute-flowers—flowers for sale!

It was all about a narcissus—"Very flower of youth, and morning's golden hour!"—as I called it once. And it danced so! (It was out on the curbstone)—and I went off happy.

Then I thought of a poem that is pure distilled ecstasy to my spirit. I will write it, and be happy again:

Sit thee by the ingle, when  
The sear faggot blazes bright;  
Spirit of a winter's night!— . . .  
Sit thee there, and send abroad,  
With a mind self-overaw'd,  
Fancy, high-commission'd :—send her!  
She has vassals to attend her;  
She will bring, in spite of frost,  
Beauties that the earth hath lost;  
She will bring thee, all together,  
All delights of summer weather;  
All the buds and bells of May,  
From dewy sward or thorny spray;  
All the heap'd Autumn's wealth,  
With a still, mysterious stealth;  
She will mix those pleasures up,  
Like three fit wines in a cup,  
And thou shalt quaff it!—

Ah! And so I went along, "sun, moon, and stars forgot"—laughing and half dancing. People stared at me—and I laughed. And then I

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## WRITING A POEM

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passed three pretty girls, and I laughed, and they laughed too. I guess they thought I was going to follow them.

—But that pleasure was not in my cup, dear girls.

Some of these days I hope to live in a beautiful world, where a man may speak to a pretty girl on the street. Badness is its own punishment, let the bad world observe.

I would rather look at a beautiful woman than do anything else I know of in this world, except listen to music.

May 18th.

I often think how I shall spend my money after *The Captive* is done. I shall take a band of chosen youths, seekers and worshipers, and we shall build a house on a mountain-top and worship the Lord in the beauty of music!

I shall have to begin at the beginning—I have never had any one to teach me music. But oh, if I did know!—And if I ever got hold of an orchestra—*how* I would make it go!

And in the middle of it the astonished orchestra would see the conductor take wings unto himself and fly off through the roof.

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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A book that I mean to write some day will be called *The Pleasures of Music*, and it will sing the joys of being clean and strong, of cold water and the early morning and a free heart. It will show how all the unhappiness of men is that they live in the body and in self, and how the world is to be saved through music, which is not of the body, nor of self—which is free and infinite, swift as the winds, vast as the oceans, endless as time, and happy as whole meadows of flowers! The more who come to partake of it, the better it is; for generous is “*Frau Musika*,” her heart is made wholly of love.

—And when I have shown all these things, *Frau Musika*, I shall tell of the golden lands that I have visited upon the wings of thy spirit!—

What objects are the fountains

Of thy happy strain!

What fields or waves or mountains,

What shapes of sky or plain!

What love of thine own kind, what ignorance of pain!

May 20th.

I live among the poor people and that keeps me humble. There is not much chance for freedom, I hear them say, there are not many who can dwell in the forests. Prove your right to it

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## WRITING A POEM

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—prove what you can do—the law is stern. I am not afraid of the challenge; I will prove what I can do.

But I see one here and there with whom the law is not so strict, I think.

I met a merchant the other night. I dreamed of him. He said: “I buy such goods as men need; I buy them as cheaply as I can, since life is grim. I sell them as cheaply as I can, since men are poor and suffering. I make of profit what I need to live humbly. I am not of the world’s seekers; I am of the finders.”

I met also a guileless fool.

We passed a great mansion. “I should like to know the man who lives there,” said the fool.

“Should you?” said I.

“Is he a hero?” asked the fool.

“No,” said I.

“Is he a poet?” asked the fool.

“No,” said I.

“Must he not be very beautiful,” said the fool, “that men judge him worthy of so much beauty?”

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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May 21st.

I must finish this thing this time! That cry rings in my ears night after night. I am toiling upward—upward—I can see no sign of the end yet—but I must finish this time! If I had to stop with this thing haunting me—if I had to go out into that jungle of a world with this weight upon me—to repress myself with this fire in my heart—I could not bear it—I could not bear it!

And if I stopped and went out into that world again—how many weeks of agony would it cost me to get back to where I am now!

I must finish this time!

May 22d.

“No, officer, I am neither a burglar nor a highwayman, nor anything else worth bothering; I’m just a poet, and I’m crazy, to all practical purposes, so please get used to me and let me wander about the streets at these strange hours of the night without worrying!”

Poor, perplexed policeman! Poor, perplexed world! Poor, perplexed mothers and fathers, sisters and cousins and aunts of poets!

Mit deinen schwarzbraunen Augen  
Siehst du mich forschend an:  
“Wer bist du, und was fehlt dir,  
Du fremder, kranker Mann!”

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## WRITING A POEM

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Who does not love the poet Heine—melodious, beautiful, bitter soul? Is there any other poet who can mingle, in one sentence, savage irony and tenderness that brings tears into the eyes? Who can tell the secret of his flower-like verses?

Ich bin ein deutscher Dichter,  
Bekannt im deutschen Land;  
Nennt man die besten Namen  
So wird auch der meine genannt.  
Und was mir fehlt, du Kleine,  
Fehlt manchem im deutschen Land;  
Nennt man die schlimmsten Schmerzen,  
So wird auch die meine genannt!

I have never seen but one beautiful thing in New York, and that is its mighty river in the night-time. I wander down to the docks when my work is done, and when it is still; I sit and gaze at it until the city is quite gone, and all its restlessness,—until there is but that grave presence, rolling restlessly, silently, as it has rolled for ages. It makes no comments; it has seen many things.

To-night I sat and watched it till a tangled forest sprang up about me, and I saw a strange, high-bowed, storm-beaten craft glide past me,



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ghostly white, its ghostly sailors gazing ahead and dreaming of spices and gold.

The old, old river—my only friend in a whole city! It goes its way—it is not of the hour.

It fascinates me, and I sit and sit and wonder. I gaze into its black and gurgling depths, and whisper what Shelley whispered: “If I should go down there, I should *know!*”

But no, I should not know anything.

*The days when thou wert not, did they trouble thee? The days when thou art not shall trouble thee as much.*

May 24th.

### AN ESSAY AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS

I write this to set forth a purpose which I have for over a year held before me. I write it that it may serve me for a standard. I write it at a time when my bank-account consists of twenty-five dollars, and I mean to publish it at such a time as by the method of plain living and high thinking, I shall have been able to increase it a hundredfold.

We are told that a man who would write a

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## WRITING A POEM

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great poem must first make a poem of his life. An artist, as I understand the word, is a man who has but one joy and one purpose and one interest in life—the creating of beauty; he is a man lifted above and set apart from all other motives of men; a man who seeks not wealth nor comfort nor fame, nor values these things at all; a man whose heart is forever lonely, whose life is an endless sorrow, and whose excuse and whose spur and whose goal and whose consecration, is the creating of beauty.

What power—be it talent or genius—God has given me, I can not tell; I only know that an artist in that sense of the word I mean to be. I have thought out a plan by which I shall make the publishing of my books, as well as the writing of them, a thing of Art.

No one will read very far in what I shall write without perceiving there a savage hatred of the spirit of the modern world of wealth; it is only because I have faith in democracy and hope in the people of my country that I do not go to worship my God on a desert island. The world which I see about me at the present moment—the world of politics, of business, of society—seems to me a thing demoniac in its hideousness; a

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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world gone mad with pride and selfish lust; a world of wild beasts writhing and grappling in a pit.

I am but a voice crying in the wilderness, and these things must run their course. But in the meantime there is one thing that I can do, and the doing of that has become with me a passion—I can keep my own life pure; I can see that there is one man amid all this madness whose life is untouched by any stain of it; who lives not by bread alone, nor by jewelry and gold; who lives not to be stared at and made drunk with pride, but to behold beauty and dwell in love; who labors day and night to keep a heart full of worship and to sing of faith to suffering men; who takes of the reward of that singing just what food and shelter his body needs; and who shrinks from wealth and luxury as he would from the mouth of hell.

To live humbly and in oblivion would be my choice, but it will be my duty to do differently. I know enough about the human heart to know that the presence of one righteous man makes ten thousand unrighteous men angry and uncomfortable. And therefore, for the help of any whom it may comfort, and for the damnation of

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## WRITING A POEM

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all the rest, I shall choose that the life I live and the thing I do shall be public; I shall choose that the millions in our country who are wearing out their frantic lives in the pursuit of the dollar, and the few who are squandering their treasures in drunken pomp, shall know that there is one man who laughs at them—whom all the millions of all of them could not buy—and who dwells in joy and worship in a heaven of which they can not even know. In other words, it is my idea not merely to make a poem of my life, but to publish the poem.

I shall have other, and deeper, and kinder reasons also, for what I shall do. What I write in my books must be from my deepest heart, the confession of those moments of which I would speak to no living soul; it must be all my tenderness, and all my rapture, and all my prayer; and do you think it will come easily to me to put that out before the rough world to be stared at, to be bound up in a book and hawked about by commercial people? . . .

(Here follows in the manuscript the outline of a plan for publishing the writer's works at cost.)

Would it not be interesting to me, if I could but pierce the future once, and see how long it is

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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destined to be before I do so publish a book! I would do my work better, I fancy, for that.—

But let it lie. I shall publish it some day surely, that I know at least.

Sometimes I can hardly realize what it will be to me when I have really won fame, when I can speak the things that so need speaking—and be heard.

May 25th.

Line by line, page by page, I do it. I am counting the days now, wondering—longing.

It is not merely the writing of it, it is the seeing of it—the planning and designing. Sometimes I brood over it for hours—I can not find what I want; and then suddenly a phrase flashes over me and like a train of gunpowder my thought goes running on—leaping, flying; and then the whole thing is plain as day. And I hold it all living in my hands.

I am blessed with a good memory. In times of excitement such as that I seize all the best phrases and carry them away, and bury them out of sight, like a miser. They are my nuggets of gold.

And sometimes I am a greedy miser, and



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## WRITING A POEM

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stand perplexed; shall I go on and gather more,  
or shall I make off with the armful that I have?

May 26th.

My religion is my Art. I have no prayer but  
my work.

Sometimes that is a glory, and sometimes  
again that is an agony. To have no duty out-  
side of yourself; to have no inspiration outside  
of yourself; to have no routine to help you,  
no voice to cry out when your conscience goes  
to sleep, no place of refuge in your weakness!—

All that is but the reason why I dare not be  
weak. I have chosen to lead and not to follow;  
therefore I have no rest, and may not look behind  
me, and can think of nothing but the way.

To be the maker of a religion is to sweat  
blood in the night-time.

There is but one way that I may live—to take  
every impulse that comes—to be watching,  
watching—to dare always and instantly, to hesi-  
tate, to put off never, to seize the skirt of my  
muse whenever it shimmers before me. So I  
make myself a habit, a routine, a discipline; and  
so each day I have new power. So each day I



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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feel myself, I bare my arms, I walk erect, exulting—I laugh—I am a god!

—And as I write that a feeling takes rise in me, and my heart beats faster; but I am tired, I sink back, I do not take the gift that is offered; and then my conscience gives a growl, and in a flash I see what I have done, and feel a throb of rage and leap up.

One of my perils is that when I am strong I feel that I must always be so. This truth that is so obvious, these words that flow so swift—what need is there to fear for them, to write them now?—And so they are never written.

May 27th.

Will you imagine me to-day, kneeling by the bedside, shuddering; my face hidden, the tears streaming down my cheeks—and I crying aloud: “I will—oh, I will!”

I can not tell any more.

May 29th.

I am coming to the last scenes. I hear them rumbling in my soul—far, far off—like a distant surf on a windless night.

I am coming, step by step: I mean to fight it out on this line.

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## WRITING A POEM

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I know a man who always rose to the occasion. Never was he challenged that he did not dare and triumph. Oh, if instead of being hungry and pining, I had but the music of that divine inspirer!—

Heller schallend,  
mich umwallend,  
sind es Wellen  
sanfter Lüfte?  
Sind es Wogen  
wonniger Düfte?  
Wie sie schwellen,  
mich umrauschen,  
soll ich athmen,  
soll ich lauschen?  
Soll ich schlürfen,  
untertauchen,  
süss in Düften  
mich verhauchen?

May 30th.

To-day I had a spiritual experience—a revelation; to-day, in a flash of insight, I understood an age—whole centuries of time, whole nations of men.

I had been writing one of the great hymns, one of the great victories; and I had been drunk with it, it had come with a surge and a sweep, it had set everything about me in motion—huge phantom shapes—all life and all being gone mad.

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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And then, when I had written it, I went out into the dark night; I walked and walked, not knowing where, still tingling with excitement. And, suddenly, I stood spellbound—the cathedral!

There it was—there it was! I saw it, alive and real before me—all of it—all that I had seen and known! I cried out for joy, I stretched out my arms to it—the great, dark surging presence; and all my soul went with it, singing, singing—up into the misty night!

June 1st.

I sat to-night by the river again. It was moonlight, and the water lay shimmering. A little yacht, gleaming with lights, sped by; it was very close, and I saw a group of people on it, I heard them laughing; and one of them—a woman—was singing.

O God, what a voice! So rich, so exquisite! It soared upward and died again, quivering like the reflection of the stars on the water. It went in—in to the very depths of my soul; it loosed all the woe of my spirit, it made the tears gush into my eyes. And then it died away, away in the distance; and I sat with my hands clasped.

Sail on—sail on—oh heavenly voice! Far-

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## WRITING A POEM

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off vision of brightness and beauty! Your lot is not my lot.

—There is something within me that weeps yet, at the echo of that music. Oh, what would I not give for music! How much of my bitterness, how many of my sorrows have melted into tears at one strain!

And I can not have it! Oh, you who do have it, do you know what you have? Oh beautiful voice, do you hear yourself?

All things else I can make for myself—friendship and love—nature and books and prayer; all things but music!

Can you not hear that voice dying—dying—  
“over the rolling waters”?

June 2d.

I shall come out of this a man—a man! I shall know how to live all my days! I shall have memories that will always haunt me, memories that I can build the years by!

June 3d.

From the time that I began *The Captive* it has been almost two months; it is just six weeks from the day I wrote that I had ten or twelve weeks in which to finish. I have done well finan-

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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cially—I have twenty-one dollars left, and I have paid for my typewriting.

It is not a fortune. But enough is as good as a fortune.

And I am coming on! I have been counting the scenes—I am really within sight of the end.

—That day when I crouched by the bed I saw all of the end. I have seen the whole thing. It will leave me a wreck, but I can do it. And it will take me about three weeks.

Think of my being able to say that!—Five or six hundred lines at least I shall have to do, and still I dare to say that. But I am full of this thing, I mount with it all the time. I am finding my wings.

Nothing can stop me now; I feel that I shall hold myself to it. I become more grim every day.

No one can guess what it means to me to find that I have hold of the whole of this thing! It is like strong wine to me—I scarcely know where I am.

June 4th.

I am sitting down by the window, and first I kick my heels against my old trunk, and then I

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## WRITING A POEM

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write this. Hi! Hi! I think of a poem that I used to recite about Santa Claus—"Ho, Castor! ho, Pollux!"—and then ho a lot of other things—a Donner and a Blitzen I remember in particular. I want a reindeer—a Pegasus—a Valkyrie—an anything—to carry me away up into the air where I can exult without impropriety!

Come blow your horn, hunter,  
Come blow your horn on high!  
In yonder room there lieth a 'cello player,  
And now he's going to move away!  
Come blow your horn—

That's an old Elizabethan song. I heard them come up for his trunk just now, and they've dragged it down-stairs, and I hear the landlady fuming because they are tearing the wall paper. I have never loved the sound of the landlady's voice before.

—The world is divinely arranged, there is no question about it.

June 5th.

Deep in my soul I was convinced that the room would be let to something worse. But now it appears that the landlady's sister is to occupy it.

—So now I will get to work!



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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—Moving is noisy; I can't complain. I have been walking about the streets. I am hungry for the work; but still, I had much to think of. It is a wonderful thing—a glorious thing, this story—it will make men's hearts leap.

June 6th.

I have plenty of time to write journals, if I feel like it. There is the sister, and there is the landlady, and there is another woman, and they have been jabbering about dresses all of the morning. I have been like a crazy man—I was all on fire this morning, too! O God, it is too cruel!

I could dress those three hags with broomsticks.

—How long is this to continue, I want to know. Here it is afternoon and they are still chattering. Every time I have tried to compose my thoughts they have come back and begun chattering again. And so I can only pace about, and then rush out into the street—and wear myself sick. I call this simply monstrous. That my soul should be tied down to such vulgarity as this—is it not maddening? Here I am—with all my

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## WRITING A POEM

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load of woe—at this fearful crisis! And I am to be shattered and wrecked and ruined by *this!* Just as long as they choose to sit there, just so long I am helpless. Was it for this that I have borne all the pain?

It seems to me that I hear jeering laughter around me from a swarm of little demons. I hide my face and flee, but they follow me.

But what can you expect? Have they not a right to talk?—Yes—all the world has a right to be as hideous as it can. And I have no right but to suffer and to choke in my rage.

Three vile, ignorant serving-women! Serving-women—ah yes, and if they were *my* servants! If I could pay them!—But who serves me! Of what consequence am I!

These things goad me, they are like poisoned thorns in my flesh. The infinite degradation of it all, the shame, the outrage!

It has burned a brand deep into my flesh, and never while I live will it come out. Ah, you rich men! You who rule us, who own the treasures, the opportunities, the joys! You who

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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trample the fair gardens of life like great blind beasts!

Do you think it is nothing to me that the inspiration and the glory of my whole lifetime is to be trampled into nothingness for lack of what others spend upon one dress? Yes, of my whole lifetime! My whole lifetime! Give me but what another will spend upon one foolish gimcrack that he never looks at again, and I will live for a whole lifetime! And I will write such music—Bah! What am I doing?

—Sometimes when I think of these things a black shadow stalks over my heart. I hear a voice, “Fool, and do you still think that you are ever to escape from this? Do you not perceive that this sordid shame is your *lot*? Do you not perceive that you may writhe and twist, struggle and pant, toil and serve, till you foam at the lips? Who will heed you! Who will hear you! Who cares anything about you!—Who wants your Art! Who wants your work! Who wants your *life*!—Fool!”

—Of course this thing could not go on. And so of course,—stammering and writhing, as I

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## WRITING A POEM

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always do when I have my nose pushed into this kind of filth—I had to speak to the landlady about it to-night.—

And of course the landlady was astonished. “Why, Mr. Stirling, can’t a body talk in a body’s own room?” Yes, a body can talk, but then other bodies have to move away.

Now she’s going to speak to her sister about it. And here I sit, writhing and trembling. Oh my God, suppose I have to move! Oh merciful Father, have pity on me—I can’t bear much of this! To go tramping around this hot and horrible city, to go into some new and perhaps yet more dirty place! And oh, the agony, the shame—suppose *that* will not do, and I have to keep on searching! Dragging this fearful burden with me! And I have only eighteen dollars left!

If I think of it any longer I shall scream with nervousness.

June 7th.

And now it is all settled. A body has to talk in a body’s own room, and a body’s nose has to turn up with indignation as a body announces the fact. And so here I sit, waiting for the express-man to come for my trunk.

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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Now that it is over it does not seem so bad. I am like a snail—once back in my shell, I do not care what happens. I have given up trying to write *The Captive*, and so nothing bothers me any more.—I have forgotten all about it now, it is years behind me.

But I have seen it all; I can get it back in good time. I do not fear.

I have rolled up a little bundle, a tooth-brush and some manuscripts principally; and I send the rest to a friend's house. I have had an inspiration. Why should I stay in this hot and steaming place?—Why should I be “barricaoded evermore within the walls of cities?” *Ich will ins Land!*

Why did I not think of this in the beginning? I am going now to see the springtime!—“the only pretty ring time, when birds do sing—hey ding-a-ding!”

That was a real idea. I do not know where I am going; but I will walk and get somewhere—there will be woods. I'll sleep in hay-ricks if it can't be managed any other way.

Away, away from men and towns,  
To the wildwood and the downs!

I could have been through in three weeks

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## WRITING A POEM

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now, I believe. But it was not to be. We have to take what comes to us—

Let us then be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate.

I'm glad I don't have to write poetry like *that*!

June 8th.

Howdy-do, Brother Bobolink! How in the world did you guess I was coming this way?

—Es ist nun einmal so,  
Kein Dichter reist incognito!

Ah, to be out in the open air again, to see the world green and beautiful; to run with the wind and look at the flowers and listen to the birds! I am sitting by a spring; I have eaten my dinner.

I turned my steps Jerseyward.

—I have been walking all day. I must find some place to stop very soon. I can not think of the country with this burden on me. I am like a sick animal—I seek a hiding-place. I fancied I might think of my work on the way, but I can not. The world is happy; my work is not happy.

My hope is all in the end of the journey, and the walking is drudgery. And then, my money



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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is going! I must find some sort of a hut—a tumble-down house, an old barn—anything.

I shall trudge one more day's journey. Then I think I shall be far enough from New York.

—I passed a tramp to-day; and while we walked together I composed an address:

“My brother—for are we not brothers, thou and I?

“Have we not fled from the sleek man, thou and I? And is it not we alone that know Truth?

“Thy clothing is ragged, and there is hunger in thine eyes; it is so also with me.

“It is thy fate to wander; it is my fate to wander too. And with restless eyes to look out upon the world, to meet with distrust from men.

“Yet not for that am I sad, nay, not for that, but for a deeper sorrow; because I was sent out into the world with a curse upon me, because I was sent out into the world a Drunkard.

“Yea, so it is, my brother.

“And that for which I thirst is not easy to find; and when I have found it I am not content, but must seek more; and so I have only desolation.

“Who laid this curse upon us, my brother?

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## WRITING A POEM

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“ That we should dwell in sorrow and unrest?

“ That no man should heed our voice, and that we should grow weak and faint?

“ That we should die, and be forgotten—thou and I?

“ Oh, tell us wherefore—ye wise men.”

June 9th.

I have walked another day. I am beginning to get away from the suburban towns, and into the real country. I knew that it would cost me a good deal to go to a hotel last night, and it was warm, so I slept in a hay-stack! It was quite an adventure. Now I've got my pockets stuffed full of rolls, Benjamin Franklin style.

—My mind is like the ocean after a storm.

The great waves come rolling over it still; it is all restless, tossing. But it is sinking, sinking to rest!—Heaven grant that I may find my place of refuge before it is quite calm.

It is everything or nothing with me; I am made that way. Either I give every instant of my time, every thought, every effort to my work, or else I close up like a flower and *wait*. I can not write poetry and hunt a lodging too.

So I am waiting—waiting.—

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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June 10th.

I began inquiring to-day—a shanty, a barn—anything. Every one thinks it necessary to be very much puzzled about what I want it for. My clothes are still fairly respectable, and so they tell me about pretty summer cottages—only so much per month!

June 12th.

I have been tramping on and on for two more days. I do not believe I shall ever find what I want. Nothing but one old musty place in ruins, so far! And my money is going, and I am wild with anxiety! I am almost tempted to turn back to the ruin.

June 13th.

I am sitting in a room in a dirty hotel. It was raining to-day and I had to come here. I shall probably have to pay fifty cents too. I won't stay to breakfast.

Oh what will I do if my money gives out? I saw a cottage to-day, that a man said I could have for ten dollars a month. I was tempted to spend nearly all I had and take it, and live on bread and water. I am desperate.

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## WRITING A POEM

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June 14th.

"Perhaps maybe you'd like 'Oaklands,'" said the farmer, laughing.

"Oaklands" turned out to be the home of a millionaire "dry-goods man" who was in Europe. I did not want "Oaklands."

"I don't know of anything else," said the farmer, scratching his head. Then he added with a grin, "unless it be the cook-house."

"What's the cook-house?" I asked, suspiciously.

"Oh, it's a kind of a little place they've got 'way out in the woods," said the farmer. "It's where they goes when they goes picnicking."

My heart gave a jump. "What sort of a place?" I asked.

"They've got a big platform chiefly, where they put up a tent. The cook-house ain't nothin' but a little two by four shanty, with a big stove in it."

"How big is it?" I cried.

"It's about half o' this here room, I reckon."

("This here room" was about six of my rooms in New York!)

"And where is it?" I cried. "How can I get there?"

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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“ Oh, you don’t want to go to no sech place ez that!” said the farmer. “ There ain’t no bed nor nothin’ in it! An’ it’s two mile out there in the woods!”

Let anybody imagine how my heart was going! “ Who can show it to me?” I panted.

“ Why,” said he, “ I’m the man that’s in charge of it; but I——”

“ And can you rent it to me for a month?”

“ Why, I don’t know any reason why I can’t rent it to you for a year—only it ain’t worth nothin’, an’——”

“ Then rent it to me! The less it is worth the better it will suit me. But come, show me where it is!”

“ I reckon I can show you,” said the man, looking perplexed. “ But what in the world do you want to go into that lonesome place for? Why, boy, nobody goes there in a month! An’ what you goin’ to do for somethin’ to eat, an’ some place to sleep, an’——”

I managed to get him started at last. And now, oh just look at me! I’ve been roaming around staring at it—inside and outside. The gods love me after all.

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## WRITING A POEM

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The infinite relief that it is! The infinite exultation that it is! And all to myself—not a soul near me! And out in the woods! *And mine for a month!* Oh blessed 'cello player that moved away; blessed landlady's sister that talked—!

And oh blessed cook-house! We will make thee a consecrated cook-house before we get through—we will! We will cook a dish in thee that will warm the hearts of a goodly company—oh blessed cook-house!

—And outside a great white moon streaming through the forest trees!

The “cook-house” is about ten feet square. It is about one-third stove, now covered with a newspaper and serving as a table. Besides that there is one chair, for which I have just improvised a leg, with the help of my knife.

Besides the knife I have a fork, a plate, a cup, and a spoon—borrowed from the farmer. I have a blanket and a bed consisting of an old carriage robe, rented from the farmer. I have a lamp and a kerosene-can—ditto. I have a frying-pan—ditto. But I haven't my little oil-stove, so I fear I shall eat mostly cold things. I have a pail of milk, a loaf of bread, a ginger-cake, some butter,



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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some eggs, some bacon, some apples and some radishes; also a tooth-brush, a comb, a change of clothing, two handkerchiefs, some pencils and paper, Prometheus Bound, Prometheus Unbound, Samson Agonistes, faith, hope, and charity!

—I believe I have named all the necessities of life.

June 15th.

I have scooped myself out a bathtub below the spring. I forgot towels in my list of necessities! I fear it will be inconvenient on rainy days. I am like a child with a new toy, in my wonderful home. I was too excited to think of working. I fried an egg over a little fire, and then I roamed all about the woods. I don't remember ever having been so happy before. I had forgotten there was anything beautiful in the world.—

—I spent the whole of the afternoon dreaming a dream. When I have finished *The Captive* and gotten some money, I am going to have a little house in the woods! I have just had it before my eyes—and I laughed with delight like a boy.

It will be a fine big house—it will cost about

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## WRITING A POEM

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fifty dollars; and there will be a table and a chair, and a cot, and such things. It will stand by a lake, a wild lake far out in the mountains! I have vowed to find a lake at least five miles from anything; and once a week I will have somebody bring me provisions.

—That is the way I shall spend next summer!

—Up, up! Get to work!—

June 17th.

I have done nothing for two days but wander around and stare at things. It is all gone, every gleam of it! And I can not bring it back—I know not what to do, where to turn. I stopped in one of the hardest parts of the whole thing—in the very midst of it; and how in the world am I to begin? I walk around, I sit down, I get up again; I try to put my thoughts upon it, I bring them back again and again. But I can not do it—I have let every thread of it go. What has tramping over the country and delight in houses got to do with my work?

I have nothing to write—the whole thing is a blank to me. And here I am, eating up my provisions!—This shows me what I am—what a child.

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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—But how am I to get up on those fearful heights again? How am I to take the first step toward those fearful heights again? I cry that all day!

June 20th.

Oh, the joy of being out in the woods! I never knew of it before—I never dreamed it!

It is better than an orchestra. To be able to stretch your arms! To have a place to walk! To be able to talk aloud!—to laugh—to shout—to do what you please!—to be free from all men, and the thought of all men!

And to hear your own poetry aloud!—I cried out to-day that I would go back and do the whole of *The Captive* over again, so that I could hear it out loud. It made me quite wild yesterday when I first realized that I was *alone*!

—Last night there was a gale, and the clouds sped over the moon, and the wind roared in the trees—and I roared too!

—“For I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set!”

June 21st.

I did just as I have always done before. I got desperate enough, and then I went to work.

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## WRITING A POEM

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I said "I will! and I will! and I will!" I think  
I said nothing else for twenty-four hours.

And so the storm again, and the great waves  
speeding!

Is there any one who has ever watched the  
great waves?—How they go! They take you  
right with them. My verses shall be waves.

I am tired out again; but oh, I am filled with  
my music! There was never any poetry like it in  
the world!

And at the height of it I cry out: "I am free!  
I am free!

"I won't have to stop again!

"I can go to the very end of it!


"And I don't care who hears me!

"I am free!"

June 23d.

I ate a raw egg this morning. For yesterday  
I let the fire go out five times, and gave up my  
breakfast rather than start a sixth.

I wanted to save time—I thought it would  
be egg just the same; but I record it for future  
generations of poets, that the experiment is not  
a success. You taste raw egg all day.



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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I shall have them all hard-boiled in the farmhouse after this.

—Twenty-eight lines to-day! I had more, but I lost them, and then I fell down.

—There is always a new height, but there are not always new words. My verse grows more and more incoherent, and more and more daring. I can feel the difference of a whole lifetime between it now, and what I wrote ten weeks ago.

—That is as it should be, of course. One does not reckon by days in a dungeon.

I notice also that the periods get longer; it has more sweep—it leaps wider spaces—it is less easy to follow.

—Oh, let not any man read what I wrote this morning, except he stand upon the heights!

I have worn a path in the woods, deep and wide, pacing back and forth, back and forth, all day. Any one who saw me would think that I was mad. Fighting—fighting—all the time fighting! Sometimes I run—sometimes I don't know what I do. Last night I know that it grew

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## WRITING A POEM

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dark, and that I was still lying flat on the dead leaves, striking my hands, that were numb with excitement. I was too weak to move—but I remember panting out, “There is nothing like that in *King Lear!*”

I brought about twenty phrases out of that, and one or two sentences. They will fall into the verse the next time it comes.

June 24th.

—Listen to me, oh thou world—I will tell you something! You may take a century to understand those phrases—to stop laughing at them, perhaps—who knows? But those sentences are *real*; and they will last as long as there is a man alive to read them!

When I let anything make me cease to believe in that scene, may I die!

—I will shout it aloud on the streets; they are *real!*

And there has been nothing like them done for some years, either.

June 25th.

To-day you may imagine me frantically throwing stones at a squirrel. I said: “If I get



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him I won't have to go to the farmhouse tomorrow."

I had had nothing to eat but bread and apples for two meals, and I couldn't stand that again.

I had fried squirrel and fried apples for supper. It was a very curious repast.

And I was hungry, and I ate too much! That made me wild, of course, and I flung all my apples away into the woods. May they feed new squirrels!

June 26th.

I get up every morning like—like the sun! I overflow with laughter—nothing frightens me now. I never knew what was the matter with me before—it was simply that I could not fight as I chose. If ever I go back again to have my soul pent up in the cities of men!

I am full of it—full of it! I grapple with it all the day, I can not get enough of it. I do crazy things.

And the harder it is the faster I go! This thing has been my torturing—it has made me fight and live. That is really the truth.

And I am coming to the end—really to the end!

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## WRITING A POEM

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June 27th.

A rainy day! And no glass in my house—  
only a board cover to the window. I made my-  
self a nest on the sheltered side.

Nearer! Nearer!

June 29th.

Wandering through the woods dreaming of  
a banquet-hall.—The guests are witty.

I have put into the mouths of the guests all  
that the world has said to me, since first I went  
poetical.

June 30th.

To-day I got a big stock of things to eat. I  
count my time not by days, but by loaves of  
bread and dozens of hard-boiled eggs.

—This book goes out into the world, not to  
be judged, but to judge!

July 1st.

You do not hear much from a man in a bat-  
tle, just now and then a cry.

I have gone in to seek out my last enemy—  
the last demon who has defied me. I shall close  
with him—I shall have the thing over with—I  
will no longer be haunted and made sick.

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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—I believe I shall do it all in one day. I don't think I can lay it aside.

July 3d.

It is done!—

I wrote that at three o'clock this morning, and then I lay back and laughed and sobbed, and in the end I fell asleep in the chair.

I was not ill—my relief was so great. I was only happy. I lay back and closed my eyes. I have born my child.

It is done! It is done! I realize it, and then I am like a crazy person. I do not know what I am doing—I only wander around and sit down in the woods and laugh and talk to myself. O God, I am so happy!

I have only to write the end—the last scene in the dungeon. And that is nothing. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course!”

July 4th.

I have only to write the echoes that are in my heart, the stammering words of thanksgiving. It is nothing—I have been over them. My whole being is melted with the woe of them—but I can do them anywhere—anyhow.

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## WRITING A POEM

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—And a sudden wild longing has come over me for the city. I must take all the world into my arms—I am so happy—I love it so!

Ah, I have done it! I have done it! I am free! *Free!* FREE!

I must get this thing typewritten—I must get rid of it—it must be published. How long does it take to get a book published?

July 5th.

I fought a fight with myself yesterday, and won it. The last of my weaknesses! I wanted to pack up my things and go home! And finish my poem on the train! I was that hungry for the goal! But I am still here—doing the last scene. I shall stay until it is done. I can not stay after that.

Let me hear how your voice trembles as you sing the last strains of your song, and I will tell you how great an artist you are.

Good night, sweet prince,  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

July 6th.

Five in the afternoon! And the wind was howling in turret and tree, and all the forest was an organ chant. So I packed up my belongings,

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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and laid my poem in next to my heart—the last words written: “It is done!”

And I went out and stood and gazed at my little home. Farewell, farewell, little home! Perhaps I shall never see you again; but ever you will live in my fancy as my heaven upon earth. They built thee for picnic parties! And I wonder what proud prince had built for his pleasures—the Garden of Gethsemane!

And now I go forth like a bridegroom out of my chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. And all the world dances around me, and I stretch out my arms and sing!

Come, come, my foes, where are ye now? What foes shall I be afraid of now! Is it the world and its trials? Come!

I go back to conquer—I have forged my weapon! I have bared my arm! Where are those foes of mine?

There is nothing so commonplace that it does not sing to me. I walk with a springing step, I laugh, I exult. Birds, flowers, men—I love them all; I get into the train, and the going of it is drunkenness. I have won! I have won!

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## WRITING A POEM

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I go back to the world. Come, world! I have but four dollars left—four dollars!—and The Captive!

It is not strange that a man should be made drunk with happiness by the writing of a tragedy! That is the great insincerity of the artist. "That cry of agony!—what a triumph of genius was that my cry of agony!"

—It is not the sorrow, it is the struggle; so I read the tragedy. This man is dead, but God lives, and Art lives.

I will go back, I will do anything now—I will empty ash-cans, and find it a joy. The book is done—safe in next to my heart!—And now it will be printed, and not fire nor earthquake can destroy it after that. Free! Free!

I am writing on the train. I write commonplaces. That is because I can not shout.

But back there, coming out of the woods, I shouted—and not commonplaces either!

Coming out of the forest—forest-drunk! Now I know all about Pan and his creatures!

I write carelessly. But in my heart I sit



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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shuddering before that fearful glory. O God, my Father, let me not forget this awful week, and I will live in Truth all my days.

July 7th.\*

Wandering all day about the streets of the hot city, seeing it not, hearing it not—waiting for the last lines of the poem to be copied! I could not do anything until that was done, and at a publisher's. I got it and fled home, and spent the night correcting the copy.

Ah, God, what a thing it is! How it roars, how it thunders, how it surges! How infinite, how terrible! Stern, throbbing—is there anything like it in the world?

Ten lines of it make my blood tingle—an act of it makes me bury my face in my pillow and laugh and sob for five minutes.

Go forth, oh my perfect song!

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\* Possibly an error in the date, as the day was Sunday.

PART II

SEEKING A PUBLISHER



## PART II

### SEEKING A PUBLISHER

July 8th.

TO-DAY I took it to the publisher's!

I had been pondering for a week who were the best publishers. To-day I hardly had the courage to go in—I know nothing about such things—and my hands shook so I could hardly hold the package.

I asked to see the manager. I told him I had a manuscript to submit. He looked at me—I guess I must look rather seedy. "What sort of a manuscript?" he asked. "A blank verse drama!"

Then he took it and glanced over it. "Blank verse dramas are difficult things to publish," he said.

"You had best read it, I think," I answered, "you will find it worth while."

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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“Very well, if you wish,” said he, “we always read everything that is offered to us.”

“How soon shall you be able to let me know?”

“Oh, in a week or ten days.”

And then I went out—shuddering with excitement. A week or ten days! Well—I can wait. I have done all *my* duty, at any rate.

July 9th.

I have certainly played a bold game with my poem! At the publisher's at last—and I, having paid my room-rent, have just a dollar in my pocket!

I have been tramping about all day to-day, looking for some work. I don't care what it is—I can do anything to keep alive for a week or ten days.—I wonder if they will advance me some money at once.

They all stare at me suspiciously. I think some of the wildness of the woods must still hang about me.—Anyway, I walk along on air, I fear nothing. I could hug all the passers-by. My book is at the publisher's! I could beg, I think,

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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if I had to, and do it serenely, exultingly. I have only a dollar—but have I not all the stars?

I was thinking to-day about Carlyle, and that ghastly accident to his manuscript. Let others blame Carlyle for his sins—for those days of agony and horror I forgive him all things, and love him.

I have the original manuscript of *The Captive* put safely away. If that poem were destroyed it would kill me. I can think of anything else in the world but such a thing as that.

July 10th.

What will they write me about it? I picture to myself all the emotions of a publisher when he discovers a poem like that! Ah yes, good publisher, I have scanned your lists for many months back; but you have published nothing like *The Captive*.

And then I shall taste my first drop of success.

—I do not want it for myself—it is not that—I want it for the book! I want people to love it—I want it to stir their souls! I want brothers and



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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friends and lovers in that great glory of mine!  
That is why I want all the world to shake with it.

And then I can go on!

—I wonder if they will write to me sooner,  
when they find out what it is.—

I have been picturing myself with some money ! It is all over now—and I can do that—will it not be strange to have some money! I have been thinking where I should live, and what I should do.

The first thing I shall do is to get somebody to teach me music. And then all the concerts that I long for! How long has it been since I have heard a note of music?

I think that is all I want. I want no toys in my life. I want my freedom, and my soul, and the forest once again.—

I read some of the psalms to-night—far, far into the morning. My heart is a psalm.

—I have gotten something to do! I am a waiter in a restaurant on Sixth Avenue! I got

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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the place this morning. Ugh!—it is nasty beyond words. But I do not care, it will keep me alive.

July 11th.

What a thing is hope! I have been for two days chained in the most horrible kind of a place. Picture it—to stand all day and see low people stuffing themselves with food—the dirt and the grease and the stench and the endless hideous drudgery! And I five days out of the springing forest and the ecstasy of inspiration!—Truly, it is a thing to put one's glory to a test! But I hardly feel it—I walk on air—deep back in my soul there is an organ song, I hear it all day, all day!

How soon will they write? I fly up-stairs each night, looking for a letter. Hurry up! Hurry up!

—“*Pegasus im Joche!*”

July 13th.

The book! The book! I go thinking about it—when I come home I throw myself down on the bed and laugh with suppressed excitement. I think all day—they are reading it now, perhaps! Ah, my book! And perhaps I'll find somebody at home there to see me about it to-night!

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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I look at the reviews—I am interested in all the books of the day now—because *The Captive* is going to be among them! How will it seem to see it there, in big letters?

And how will it seem to be known? I am not a fool—I know what will help me to my peace when I am out there in the woods again—and it will not be that the newspapers have been talking about me, and that the dames of high society have asked me to their tea-parties. But there are one or two men in this world that I should like to know. Perhaps as the author of a book that is known it would be possible.

—Yes, before I was one of the mob, and now I have shown what I can do.

July 15th.

The horror of that awful “eating-joint” grows on me every hour. I could not bear it much more—physically it makes me ill, and no amount of enthusiasm can make that better. I will not sell a second more of my time than I have to. I made up my mind that I would give up the place at the end of the week. The money will do me for another week after that, and by

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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that time I will surely have heard from the publishers.

I'll have to tell them, that's all,—it is nothing to be ashamed of. They'll have to give me some money in advance. I can not live in that cess-pool.

Yes, to-morrow and half of the next day,—that is all I will bear!

—I long sometimes to go and see them; but no, I can wait.

July 17th.

I treated myself to a long holiday this afternoon. I went up to the park, and walked and walked. Everything was in a tumult within me—I was clear of that last prison. And all the excitement and the power of that poem are still in me. I am restless, all on fire, stern, hungry, like a wind-storm. Come not near me unless you wish for truth! Come not near me if you fear the gods!

To-day my thoughts went surging into the future. I shall have money!—I shall be free!—And what shall I do next? I counted up what

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I might have—even a slight success for the book would mean a fortune such as turned my head to think of. What would I do?

My mind pounced upon a new work—a work that I have dreamed of often. Would it be my next work? I thought—would I be able—would I dare? It is a grand thing.

I went on, and got to thinking of it; I almost forgot that I was not still in the woods. What a sweeping thing I see it!

The American! It would have to be a three-volume novel, I fear—it would be as huge as *Les Misérables*!

It is the Civil War! I am haunted by that fearful struggle. Is there anything more fearful in history, any more tremendous effort of the human spirit? And so far it has not made one great poem, one great drama, one great novel!

It was the furnace-fire in which this land was forged—this land which holds in its womb the future of the world—this land that is to give laws to the nations and teach mankind its destiny. I search the ages, and I find no struggle so fraught with meaning, with the woe and the terror and the agony of a desperate hope.

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It must be all put into an art-work, I say! There is no theme that could thrill the men of this country more, that could lift them more, that could do more to make their hearts throb with pride. We sent all the best that we had—armies and armies of them—and they toiled and suffered, they rotted upon a thousand fields of horror. And their souls cry out to me, that it must not be for naught, that the fearful consecration must not be for naught.

The world is filled with historical fiction; it is the cant and the sham of the hour.—Bah!

—This is what I long to do; to take the agony of that struggle and live it and forge it into an art-work; to put upon a canvas the soul of it; to put it there, living and terrible, that the men of this land might know the heritage that is come down to them.

It would take years of toil, it would take money, too—I should have to go down there. But some day I shall do it!

I saw some of it to-day, and it made my blood go!

I saw a poet, young, sensitive, throbbing at the old, old wrong, at the black shame of our his-



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tory; I saw him drawn into that fearful whirlpool of blood and passion, driven mad with the pain and the horror of it; and I saw him drilled and hammered to a grim savageness, saw him fighting, day by day, with his spirit, forging it into an iron sword of war. He was haggard and hollow-eyed, hard, ruthless, desperate. He saw into the future, he saw the land he loved, the land he dreamed of—the Union! She stretched out her arms to him; she cried with the voices of unborn ages, she wrung her hands in the agony of her despair. And for her his heart beat, for her he was a madman, for her he marched in sun and in snow, for her he was torn and slashed, for her he waded through fields of slaughter. Of her he dreamed and sung—sung to the camps in the night-time, till armies were thrilled with his singing.

This was the thing of which he sang, the gaunt, grim poet: There is a monster, huge beyond thought, terrible, all-destroying; the name of it is Rebellion, and the end of it is Death! Day by day you grapple with it, day by day you hammer it, day by day you crush it. Down with it, down with it! Finish it!

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I heard that as a battle-cry: "Finish it!" I saw a man, wild and war-frenzied, riding a war-frenzied horse; he rode at the head of a squadron, bare-headed, sword in hand, demon-like—thundering down-hill upon a mass of men, stabbing, slashing, trampling, scattering! Above the roar of it all I heard his cry: "Finish it! Finish it!"

And afterward he staggered from his horse and knelt by the men he had killed, and wept.

—I saw him again. It was when the man of the hour had come at last; when the monster had met his master; when, day by day, they hammered it, the fire-spitting, death-dealing monster; when they closed with it in death-grapple in a tangled wilderness, where armies fought like demons in the dark, and the wounded were burned by the thousands. I saw companies of fainting, starving, agonized men, retreating, still battling, day by day; and I saw the wild horseman galloping on their track, slashing, trampling—and still with the battle-yell: "Finish it! Finish it!"

I saw him yet a third time. It was done, it was finished; and he lay wounded in a dark room, listening. Outside in the streets of Washington a great endless army marched by, the

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army of victory, of salvation; and the old war-flags waved, and the old war-songs echoed, and he heard the trampling of ten thousand feet—the rumbling of the old cannon—and the ocean-roaring of the vast throngs of men! A wild delirium of victory throbbed in his soul,—burned him up, as he lay there alone, dying of his passion and his wounds. Born of the joy that throbbed in the air about him, born of the waving banners and the clashing trumpets and the trampling hosts and the shouting millions—a figure loomed up before him—a figure with eyes of flame and a form that towered like the mountains—with arms outstretched in rapture and robes that touched the corn-fields as she sped—angel, prophetess, goddess!—Liberty!

—And at her feet he sobbed out his life.

—The American!

July 18th.

Still another day, and no news from the publisher's. The time is nearly up—I can not wait much longer.

They have rejected The Captive! They have rejected The Captive! In God's name, what does it mean? They have rejected The Captive!

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I stared at the paper in blank consternation! I couldn't realize the words, I couldn't understand what they meant. Such a thing never occurred to me in my wildest moment.

What is the matter with them—are they mad? Great God, that any human creature!—And without a line about it!

—“We have carefully considered the MS. which you have kindly offered us, and regret that we are not advised to undertake its publication. We are returning the MS. with thanks for your courtesy in submitting it.”

That letter came to me like a blow in the face. —I have spent hours to-night pacing the streets, almost speechless. Fools!

—But I will not let such a thing disturb me for an instant. Yes, they are a great publishing-house—but such things as I have seen them publish! And they “regret.” Well, you *will* regret, some day, never fear!

July 19th.

The manuscript arrived this morning. I took it up-stairs and sat down, trembling, and read it all again.

I wish that I could see the man or woman

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who read that poem and rejected it—just that I might see what kind of looking person it is. Oh, the wildness of it, the surge and the roar of it! The glory of it!

I can not afford to waste my time worrying about such things. I only say “Fools!”

—I took it to another publisher. I don't know any in particular, but I will try the best. This publisher didn't seem very anxious to read it. Go ahead, try it!—Or are you a fool too?

—Of course I shall have to begin tramping around, looking for some work again. I must find something better than the last.

July 20th.

Nervous, impatient—it is so that I have lived. Never to waste an instant has been my passion. I have struggled, watched, fought for a minute. If ever I were held back or kept idle it drove me wild, and I burst through everything. It has always been a torture to me not to be thinking something.

But less of that torture than I have now, I think I never had; it seems as if I had won the mastery—I mind nothing any more. I walk

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upon the air, and I never tire. Thoughts—endless thoughts—come to me without ever the asking; nothing disturbs me, nothing hinders me—I take everything along with me.—I am full of impulse, of life, of energy!—

I am the owner of the sphere,  
Of the seven stars and the solar year,  
Of Cæsar's hand and Plato's brain!—

And this when I have spent all the day looking for work!—answering advertisements, and tramping to this place and that! Discouraging?—what does the word mean?

—I am the man who has never learned to shiver and shake!

I thought of a young Irishman I worked with a long time ago. “Once I went into a place, and says I, ‘I’d like to be havin’ a job.’ An’ he looked me over, an’ he says, says he, ‘Git oot!’ An’ so I thought I’d better git oot!”

It might take me some time to find a publisher, I was thinking to-day. I do not know anything about publishers. But once get it before the world, that is the thing! I fear nothing,



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I can wait. It is done, that is all I can think of.  
—The rest “ must follow, as the night the day.”

July 21st.

To-night I sat by the bedside trembling, thinking of what I had learned. Oh, this faith that I have gained, it must go forth among men! A prayer welled up in my soul—I have learned what I can do—I have learned that I can do what I will! I have seen the infinite heights that lie beyond—oh, let me not fail! The hopes of unborn generations are in my soul.

—That is true. What systems shall come of this vision of mine, what new ways of beauty, what new happiness and new freedom! That thought has shaken the very depths of my soul.

It makes me leap up—it makes me wish to go! Why should I not start now? Why should I waste to-day?

July 22d.

I have been making plans. I must get to work. I was racing through all sorts of vast schemes to-day as I walked about the streets hunting for something to do. I will make my Greek perfect first—I can do that while I am walking.

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I made an athlete of myself pacing up and down with *The Captive*! I honestly think I walked ten or twelve hours some days. I have walked all day to-day, but I do not feel tired. I answered advertisements in the papers.

—Why are men impolite? I do not believe I could ever learn to speak rudely.

July 23d.

The impossible occupations that I have thought of, in trying to solve my problem! To-day I saw myself a lighthouse-keeper! What does a lighthouse-keeper do, anyway? And could I manage to get such a place where I could be alone by myself?

—But no, some one would have to attend to the light!—

I thought of being a hall-boy. But you are not paid very much.—I said, however, that I would at least get some sort of a place up-town. I could not stand it down in the “business” world.

God, how horrible it is! All that seething effort—and for what? All this “business”—is

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it really necessary to the developing of the souls of men? Does each man in that rushing mob need more money yet, to begin developing his soul?

—Another occupation! I saw myself a lonely hunter, living by a mountain lake, and shooting game for a living! I wonder if that wouldn't be possible. I never shot any game, but I could learn.

It would suit me perfectly to sit by a mountain lake and read Greek and watch for ducks.

July 27th.

I was getting down pretty close to the limit again, but I got something to do to-day. I had to take what I could find; it is what would be called a good position, I suppose; I am in a wholesale-paper store. I get twelve dollars, and that is quite something.

The business of the will is to face the things that come—not any other things. Now I have to drill and discipline myself anew, to learn to save my soul alive in a wholesale-paper store!

It is a great, dingy place, full of chaffering, hungry-looking men. They are all desperately

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serious; it is a great "business house," I believe; the very atmosphere of it is deadly poison.

—Oh bald-headed, grim-visaged senior-partner, that didst gaze at me over black-rimmed spectacles—so I have "an opportunity to rise," have I?

Yes,—I shall rise upon wings of a sapphire sheen, and toss myself up in the wind and shake down showers of golden light into thy wondering eyes, oh bald-headed, grim-visaged senior-partner!

—It is my business to show samples of paper. I shall learn all about them in a few days, and then I shall go at the Greek.

July 28th.

Whenever I feel weary I run off into a corner and whisper into my ear, "It is done! Be not afraid!" Instantly my heart goes up like swift music.

July 31st.

Twelve days since I left *The Captive*; they said it would take three weeks.

Something strange flashed over me to-day, something that sent a shudder through me; I

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have done a strange thing to myself this summer, not in metaphor, but in fact. I have seen a ghost; I have drunk a potion; I have gazed upon a nymph; I have made myself mad!

I am no longer a man among men—I am “the reed that grows never more again”!

—I try to lose myself in a book, but the book does not hold me. Nothing satisfies me as it used to,—I am restless, hungry, ill at ease. Why should I read this man’s weak efforts—what profits me that man’s half-truths?

—And all the time I know too well what I want—I want to fight!

I want to get back into the woods again! I want that vision again! That work again! I want *myself*!

—And here I am, a bird in a cage, beating the bars. What folly to say that I can be strong and endure this thing! That I can endure anything, dare anything. Yes, so I can—if I can strive! Put me out there alone, and set me a task, and I will do it though it kill me. But how can I conquer when I can not strive?

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Here I am, tied! I am tied—not hand and foot—but tied in soul. Tied in time! Tied in attention! How can I be anything but beaten and wretched? How can I expect anything but defeat and ruin? A song comes to me, it calls me—and I can not go! I must stare at it and watch it leave me!—How can that not drive me wild?

The great wings of my soul begin to beat—I go up, I am wild for the air,—and then suddenly I am struck back by the hideous impertinences of the wholesale-paper business! How can I endure such things as that—how can I *conquer*? Why, it is like the clashing in my ears of twenty trumpets out of tune!

Do not keep me here long! Do not keep me here long!

—It is something that I find very strange and curious to watch—how spontaneously, and instinctively, all young men dislike me. Have I a brand upon my forehead?

It is not my habit to stand upon the pedestal of my inspiration, and gaze down upon those that



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I meet. Sympathy is my life—I can sympathize even with men who aspire to rise in business. But I have to live many lives, and new lives; and I can brook no delay.

I will make no compromises; I have sworn a vow against idle words—they may dislike me as they will. I give my work, for which I am paid; I can not give my soul.

August 2d.

Oh what a horrible thing is “business”! Here, where I am,—this is *the world*. An industrial era!

This is a wholesale-paper house, and the three partners who run it call themselves, with unconscious irony, “wholesale-paper MEN”! They live their lives in wholesale-paper,—they talk it—they dream it—they plan it—they have no hope in the world except to find people to buy wholesale-paper! And the manager—keen and hungry—he is planning to be a wholesale-paper man himself. And here are twenty-five men and youths apparently having but one virtue in the world, the possibility of consecrating their souls to wholesale-paper!

What they make is useful, it may even be

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sublime—in which way the business is unique. But none of these men ever thinks of that—they would be just as absorbed in the business if it were wholesale bonnets. None of them has the least care in the world about books. And these men who come here to buy the paper—are *they* any better? Or is their interest in the paper the profits it may bring to them?

—Dear God!—That brought me back to The Captive.

—I have been sick to-day, and sickness clips your wings. It is an error of mine—I pay for my food with my soul, and so I try to eat little, and thereby make myself ill.

August 3d.

I got my first twelve dollars to-day!

August 5th.

To-day I made a resolution, that I must stop this chafing, this panting, this beating my wings to pieces. A man's inspiration must be under his control, to stop it, as well as to start it. I can not write or dream poetry while I am in this slavery, and somehow I have to realize it. When I go

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home I will get to some work, and not wander around hungering.

After my glimpse of the forest it is frightful to be penned in this steaming city. To have to work in an office all day—sometimes it makes me reel. And then at night too, when I try to read, the room gets suffocating.

Then I go out among the tenement-house crowds, carrying my little note-book. I stop at a lamp-post and look at a couple of words and then walk on and learn them! So I go for hours.

—Hurry up, publishers!—I wrote to them to-night.

August 7th.

“In answer to your letter of the 5th instant, we beg to inform you that your manuscript is now in the hands of our readers, and that you may expect a report upon it in a week.”

I am reading Euripides.

August 8th.

Oh how will I find words for my delight when I have got a little money and can escape from dirt and horror. To-night two vile men have been quarreling in the room underneath, and I

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have been drinking in all their brutal ugliness.  
Bah!—

To live in a place where there are not horrible women in wrappers, reeling, foul-smelling men, snuffling children with beer-cans!

This is more of my “economy”!

To-night I sat upon the edge of the bed and whispered, “To be free! I shall be free!”—until I was trembling in every nerve.

My beautiful poem! My beautiful poem will set me free!

Sometimes I love it just as if it were a child.

August 10th.

Twelve dollars more!

August 11th.

“We have read with the utmost interest the manuscript of *The Captive* which you have been so good as to show us. We are very sorry to say that it does not seem to us that the publication of this poem would be a venture in which we could engage with profit. At the same time, however, we have been very much struck with it, and consider it an altogether remarkable piece

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of work. We should like very much to have the privilege of an interview with you, should you find it convenient."

Now what in the world do they mean by that? If they are not going to publish the book, what do they want to see me for? And I've wasted two weeks more of my life!

I had not reckoned on petty things such as these. I fear I have not much knowledge of men. How can a man read *The Captive* and not know that others would read it? What are they in business for, anyway?

August 12th.

I begged off from work for an hour. I have had an interview with the great publishers! I have learned a great deal too.

I saw the manager of the firm. He meant to be very kind, that is the first thing to say; the second is that he is very well-dressed, and comfortable-looking.

"Now, Mr. Stirling," said he, "you know a publishing house is always on the lookout for the new man. That is why I wanted to have the pleasure of meeting you. It is evident to me

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that you have literary talent of no common kind."

(I bow.)

"I wish that I could tell you that we could consider *The Captive* an available piece of writing; I have read it myself with the greatest care. But you must know, Mr. Stirling, that it is an exceedingly *difficult* piece of work; I mean difficult from a publisher's point of view. There is very little demand for poetry nowadays—a publisher generally brings out at a loss even the poems that make a reputation for their authors. Whether you are aware of that I don't know, but it is true; and I think of all kinds of poetry a blank verse tragedy is the most to be shunned."

(Here a pause. I have never any tongue when I am with men.)

"What I want to talk to you about, Mr. Stirling, is the work which you contemplate in the future. As I said, I was interested at once in this work; I should like very much indeed to advise you and to be of any assistance to you that I can. I should like very much to know what your plans are. I should like very much to see anything that you might write. Are you contemplating anything just at present?"



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“No, not just at present.”

“Not? Don’t you think that you might find it possible to produce something just a little more in accordance with the public taste? Don’t you think, for instance, that you might possibly write a novel?”

(Some hesitation.) “I have thought of a novel.”

“Ah! And might I ask—would it be a character study?—or perhaps historical?—or—”

“It would be historical.”

“Ah! And of what period?”

“The Civil War.”

(A great look of satisfaction.) “Dear me! Why, that is very interesting indeed, Mr. Stirling! I should like to see such a work from your pen. And are you thinking of completing it soon?”

(General discomfort on my part.) “I had never thought of the time exactly. I had feared it would take a great many years.”

(Perplexity.) “Oh, pshaw!—still, of course, that is the way all great work is done. Yes, one has to obey one’s own inspiration. I understand perfectly how he can not adjust himself to the market. I have seen too often how disastrous such attempts are.”

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(More courteous platitudes, I assenting. Then at last, weary—)

“ You don’t think, then, that you will be able to undertake *The Captive*? ”

“ No, Mr. Stirling, I really do not think we can. You understand, of course, if I take this work to the firm I have to tell them I think it will sell; and that I can not honestly do. You know that a publishing house is just as much limited as any other business firm—it can not afford to publish books that the trade does not want. And this is an especially unusual sort of thing, it is by no means easy to appreciate—you must be aware of that yourself, Mr. Stirling. You see when I read a manuscript I have to keep constantly before my mind the thought of how it is going to affect the public—a very different thing from my own judgment, of course. From the former standpoint I believe there are things in *The Captive* that would meet with a reception not satisfactory to either of us, Mr. Stirling.”

(Perplexity on my part.) “ You’ll have to explain that to me, I fear.”

“ Why—but the explaining of that would be to offer you my opinion about the book——”

“ I should be very pleased to hear it. Your

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reason for declining it, then, is not altogether that it is a blank-verse drama? ”

“ Not altogether, Mr. Stirling. It’s a little difficult for me to tell you about these things, you know. I understand that the book must have meant a great deal to you, and so I am naturally diffident. But if you will pardon my saying so, it seems to me that the book—it is obviously, of course, the work of a young man—it is very emotional, it strives to very high altitudes. I will not say that it is exaggerated, but—the last part particularly—it seems to me that you are writing in too high a key, that your voice is strained.” (An uncomfortable pause.) “ Of course, now, that is but my opinion. It will not seem of any value to you, perhaps, but while I read it I could not get away from the fact that it was not altogether natural. It seemed hysterical and overwrought in places—it gives the effect of crudeness. It is rather hard, you know, to expect a man who sits at a desk all day to follow you in such very strenuous flights.” (A slight laugh.)

“ Mind you it is not that I do not appreciate high qualities, Mr. Stirling, it is merely that it seemed to me that if it were toned down somewhat it would be better—you know such things

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strike different people in different ways; you do not find it easy to believe that it would affect men so—but I am pretty sure that the impulse of the average critic would be to go still further—to make fun of it. Here, for instance—let me read you the opinion upon the book that was handed in by one of our most experienced readers—etc., etc.—”

I have told enough of that story, giving the conversation as literally as I can recall it. I am always a fool, the presence of other men overawes me; I sit meek and take all that comes, and then make my escape. The great publishers' manager still thinks he impressed me with his wisdom—he has half an idea I'm going to “tone down” *The Captive*!

—He read me that criticism—great God, it makes me writhe! It was like a review of the *Book of Revelations* by Bill Nye.

*That my work should be judged by such men!*

—“Exaggerated!” “Hysterical!” And is there nothing hysterical in life, then? And would you go through battle and pestilence with the same serenity that you sit there at your desk all day, you publisher?

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✓ As if a man who was being torn to pieces would converse after the manner of Mr. Howells and Jane Austen!

—“Tone it down!” That bit of inanity has been haunting my ears. Tone down *The Captive*! Tone down the faith and rapture of my whole life, until it is what the reading public will find natural!—And tone down the *Liebes-Tod*—and tone down the Choral Symphony—and *Epipsychidion*—and *King Lear*!

Swounds, show me what thou'lt do:

Woo't weep? Woo't fight? Woo't fast? Woo't  
tear thyself?

Woo't drink up eisel? Eat a crocodile?

I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?

To outface me with leaping in her grave?

Be buried quick with her, and so will I:

And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw

Millions of acres on us, till our ground,

Singeing his pate against the burning zone,

Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,

I'll rant as well as thou!—

“This is mere madness,” observes the queen.  
Tone it down!

August 12th.

I sat last night brooding over this thing till almost dawn. I could not bring myself to the

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thought of offering my work again to be judged by such people. I made up my mind to take a different course—I sat and wrote a long letter to a certain poet whom I love and honor. He is known as a critic—he will know. I told him the whole story, and asked him to read the poem.

It was something that I had never thought about, the effect of *The Captive* upon commonplace people. I was so full of my own rapture—I made my audience out of my own fancy. And now these snuffy little men come peering at it!

My appeal is not to the reading public—my appeal is to great minds and heroic hearts—to the ages that will come when I have gone.

—And can it be that I am to repeat the old, old story—will every one laugh at me and leave me to starve?

—I will get myself together and prepare for a siege. I will find an opening somewhere. You can not shut up a volcano.

August 16th.

There seems to be little use of struggling. I can not control myself. I wander around, restless, unhappy. That horrible prison that I am pent in—God, how I hate it! Such heart-sicken-



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ing waiting—waiting!—and meanwhile that intolerable treadmill! It drives me wild! I am so full of life, of passion; and to be dragged back—and back—and stamped on! Each day I feel myself weaker; each day my power and my joy are going. Let me go—let me go!

Is my inspiration of no value at all, my ardor, my tenderness, my faith,—all nothing? You treat me as if I were an ox!

It is like being chained in the galleys! The dust and the heat, the jostling crowds, the banging and rattling, the bare, hideous streets—and above it all the wild, rampant vulgarity—the sordidness, the cheapness, the chaffering! My eyes stare at advertisements and signs until they burn me in my head.

Oh, the hell of egotism and vulgarity that is a city!

—“Why so much trouble? Other men bear dust and heat, and do their work without complaining!” Ah, yes!—but they do not have to write poems in the bargain!

If it were for truth and beauty, such a life would be heroism. But the hoards of wealth that

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they heap up—they spend it upon fine houses, and silly clothes, and gimcracks, and jewels, and rich food to eat, and wines to drink, and cigars to smoke! Bah!—

It is the brutality of it all that drives me wild. I see great, hulking, disgusting *bodies* that live to be pampered and fed. And after that, in the place of minds, I see little restless centers of vanity—hungering, toiling, plotting, intriguing—to be stared at and praised and admired.

August 20th.

I thought that I would surely have heard from my poet by now. I am not a good waiter.

The senior-partner's nephew is a young German, over to learn the language. He is on a furlough from the army. He has close-cropped hair, a low forehead, and two front teeth like a squirrel's. When he smiles he makes you think of a horse. He has opinions, commercial and political, which he enunciates in a loud voice. Think of listening to Prussian opinions!

And there is another clerk who was meant for a variety-show specialist. He hums comic songs and cracks jokes, and conducts witty pantomime

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incessantly. He is very popular. He is never quiet. Sometimes he slaps you on the back.

I wrestle with my soul all day; the rage of it is like to burst me. The infinite pettiness of it—that is the thing! I am bitten and stung by a swarm of poisonous flies!

August 24th.

Another twelve dollars yesterday! I gasp with relief as if I were hauling a load up successive slopes; here is so much gained, so much safe. I have gotten along on twelve dollars; I have a little over thirty-five.

I believe these things are more wearing than the toil of writing; I know I find it so. Then I accomplish something; here I work myself into nervous frenzies, and chafe and pant for nothing. I can feel how it weakens me; I can feel that I have less elasticity, less *élan* every day. Ah, God, let me go!

August 25th.

Why doesn't he answer my letter?

August 27th.

To-day I took myself off in a corner. I said: "Am I not here, have I not this thing to *do*?"

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The power that I have in my soul—it is to be used for the doing of *this*; if I am to save my soul, it must be by the doing of *this*! And I am a fool that I do not face the fact. I shall be free some day—that I know—I have only to bide my time and wait. Meanwhile I am to stay here—or until I have money enough; and now I will turn my soul to iron, and do it! I am going to study what I can in this place, and at night I am going to speed home and get into a book. I will never stop again, and never give up—and above all never think, and never feel! I will get books of fact to read—I will read histories, and no more poetry. I will read Motley, and Parkman, and Prescott, and Gibbon, and Macaulay.—Macaulay will not afflict me with wild yearnings, I guess.”

—Is there any author in the world more vulgar than Macaulay?—unless it be Gibbon. Or possibly Chesterfield.

I have heard Chesterfield's letters referred to as a “school for gentlemen.” When the world is a little bit civilized, men will read them as they now read Machiavelli's Prince.

—All these resolutions while I was selling wholesale-paper! I fought quite a battle, and

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heard some of the old-time music. What a task for a poet,—to fight *not* to live!

August 30th.

I have still heard nothing from my poet! I wrote to him to-day to ask him if he had received my letter. Eighteen whole days gone by, and I watching every mail, with *The Captive* lying idle in a drawer! I can not stand waiting like this—Why do not people answer my letters promptly?

August 31st.

I have been reading George Moore's *Evelyn Innes* for the last two days. He is striving toward deeper things.

The spiritual struggles of a young lady with two sloppy lovers at once! Of a young and beautiful girl whose first walk on the street with a baronet is a "temptation." And who turns nun at last and worships the Holy Virgin, in order to forget her nastiness! A Gallicized novelist ought to deal with Gallic characters. While I was reading *Evelyn Innes*, I could never get away from the impression that I was reading the career of a chambermaid.

And the whole story hinges upon the fact that

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a woman can not sing the sacred ecstasy of Tristan and Isolde without being a harlot!

I read the Confessions of a Young Man, and I felt the vigor of it, and the daring; but it was a very cheap kind of daring. The fundamental laws of life are occasionally enunciated by commonplace people, and that gives an opportunity to be startling. But I leave it for small boys to gape at such fireworks; my interest is in the stars.

The last chapter runs into absolute brutality. I am accustomed to say that Gautier is a ruffian author, but if there is any ruffianism in Gautier more savage than that sentiment about the "skinful of champagne," I do not know where to find it.

About such stuff as that I would say that it makes me sick, but it is not worth that—it simply makes me tired. One would not call it impudent, because it is so silly—it is the driveling of a fool. He will get me off in a corner now, will he, and probe my soul? "Out with it!—Why not confess that you'd like to live a life of dissipation if you only had the money!" Why, you poor fool, before I would live such a life, I'd have my eyes torn out, and my ears torn off, and



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my fingers, and my hands, and my feet. "Why not confess the wild joys of getting drunk on champagne!" Poor fool, I have never tasted champagne.

—"Perhaps that is just the reason," you add. When the folly of a fool reaches its climax, the fool becomes a wit. But possibly that is it, I never was drunk.

—And yet I know something about drunkenness. I once buried a drunkard. He was my father. He died in a delirium.

There must be something young about my attitude—men smile at me. But I do not find it easy to imagine evil of men. I do not mean the crowd—I do not philosophize about the crowd. But I mean the artists. I was looking at a picture of Musset the other day; it was a noble face—the face of a man; and in the face of a man I read dignity and power—high things that I love and bow before. Here are lips,—and lips are things that speak of beauty; here are eyes,—and eyes are things that seek the light. And now to gaze upon that face and say: "This man lived in foulness; he was the slave of hateful lust—he

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died rotten, and sodden with drink.”—I say that I do not find it easy.

I have nothing to do with any artist who has anything to do with sin—anything, one way or the other. If a man must still think about sin, let him go back, and let him go down,—let him be a Christian. Let him wrestle with his body, overcome himself, obey laws, and learn fear. To such men and to such ways I can only say: “I have nothing to do with you.” My life is for free men—my words are for free men—for men defying law and purged of fear, for men mad with righteousness. What right have foul men in the temple of my muse? The thought of them is insult to me—away with them—in their presence I will not speak of what I love. For I am a drunkard—yes, and I am drunk all night and all day! And I am a lover—a free lover—knowing no law and defying all restraint. And how can I say such things in the presence of foul men?

Let not any man think that he can feel the love-clasp of my muse while he hides a satyr’s body underneath his cloak. Free is my muse, and bold, fearing not the embrace of man, fearing

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not passion, nor the words of passion,—not the throbbing heart, nor the burning brow, nor the choking voice. But the warmth of her breath and the fire of her eyes, they were kindled at a shrine of which the beast does not know. Let not any man think that he can kiss the lips of my muse while his breath is tainted with the fumes of wine!

An artist is a man with one pleasure—and it is not self-indulgence; an artist is a man with one virtue—and it is not self-restraint. Sweetly and simply will I and my muse take all temptation, knowing not that it tempts, and wondering at the clamor of men. I will eat and drink that I may be nourished, I will sleep that I may be rested, I will dress that I may be warm. When I go among men it shall be to speak the truth, and when I press a woman to my heart, it shall be that a man may be born into the world. There is but one sin that I know, and that is dulness; there is but one virtue, and that is fire. And for the rest, I love pleasure, and hold it sweetest and holiest of all the words I know; the guide-post of all righteousness is pleasure—which whoso learns to read may follow all his days.

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September 1st.

“The reason for delay in replying to your letter is that it was mislaid. I am directed by Mr. ——— to say that he has so many requests to read manuscripts that he is compelled to make it an invariable rule to decline.

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“Secretary.”

So that hope is gone!

That letter—or rather the chain of thoughts which it brought me, made me feel ill to-night. “So many requests!” “An invariable rule!”

So many swarming millions, helpless, useless, dying unknown and unheeded. And I am in the midst of them—helpless, unknown, and unheeded! And now that I have done my work, I can not find any one with faith enough—interest enough—even to look at it!

How could a man who is a poet—who writes things that stir the hearts of men—how could he send such an answer to such a letter as I wrote him? I do not think that *I* shall ever send such an answer!

Or is it really true, then, that the world is such a thing that it closes the hearts even of

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poets? That his ardor and his consecration, his sympathy and love and trust—he gives all to the things of his dreams and never to the men and women he meets?

Oh how shall I find one—just one—warm-hearted man!

I begin the trying of the publishers once more to-morrow.

September 2d.

I am in my sixth week! Two weeks of the money is nearly gone—I had to get another pair of shoes and a necktie and to have some things laundered twice. I have to be respectable now, I can not wash my own clothes at the faucet when no one is about.

My “room” costs me seventy-five cents a week, and my food from a dollar and a half to two dollars. At the end of the seventh week I shall have over fifty dollars clear. I have made up my mind to give up the place at the end of that time. Twelve dollars is the most I ever earned, but I can’t stand it longer than that.

I shall be clear for nearly four months, and that will surely put me safe until I have found a publisher. I would go away into the country

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again, only I must have books. I have nothing to write now.

—Oh the heat of this dreadful city; sometimes it takes all my strength to bear that and my drudgery, and nothing else. When the night comes I am panting, and can only shut my eyes.

If I am kept here long, I tell you I shall never, as long as I live, be as strong and keen as I might have been.

So long as I was working, striving for an education, preparing myself, I could bear it. But now I have done all that I can do amid these surroundings. I cry out day and night, "I have earned my freedom!"

September 6th.

He had no business to send me that answer! He had no business to send it! I care not how many such requests he gets! Pain throbbed in that letter, hunger and agony were in it; and if he were a man he would have known it! He had no business to send me that answer! I shall never forgive him for it.

The last publisher said it would take a month; they had many manuscripts on hand, and could



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not do any better. So I have only to set my teeth together and wait.

I count the days before my escape from that hideous place down-town. The thought of it drives me wild—it gets more and more a torture. Can I stay out the week? I ask.

September 8th.

All day—all day—I have but one thought in my mind—but one thought in my life! I am beset by it, I can not escape it. That horrible shame to which I am subjected!

It turns all my life to gall! It beats down my enthusiasm, it jeers at my faith, it spits into the face of my unselfishness! I come home every night weak and worn and filled with despair, or else with a choking in my throat, and helpless, cruel rage in my soul. Never mind that I am going to be free—the wrong is that it should ever have been—it will stay with me all my days and turn all my life to gall! It will wreck all my visions, all my aspirations, my faith, my eagerness; the memory of it will sound like a mocking voice in my ears, a sneer!

Day by day I strive and struggle and tear myself to pieces, and sink back worn out; and

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don't you suppose that has any effect upon me? I can feel it. I see it plain as day, and shudder at it—I am being cowed! I am being tamed, subdued, overpowered; the thing is like a great cold hand that is laid upon me, pressing me down, smothering me! I know it—and I cry out and struggle as if in a nightmare; but it only presses the harder. Why, I was like a lion—restless—savage—all-devouring! Never-ceasing, eager, untamable—hungry for life, for experience, for power! I rushed through in days what others took months at—I watched every instant—I crowded hours into it.

—And now look at me! I crouch and wneine—there is an endless moan in my soul. Can you break a man's spirit so that he never rises again? So that all his attempts to be what he was mock at him? So that he never *tries* any more? Look at those poor wretches you pass on the street—those peasants from Europe, from Russia! See the restless, shifting eyes, the cringing gait—*that* is what it is to be tamed!

Hateful tyrant of the commonplace—so you will lay your cold hand over me and crush out

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all the fire from my heart. All this that was to build new empires—new hopes, new virtues, new power; all that I was, and all that I sought to be! Ah, but you will not crush me—understand it well, you may beat me and kick me, you may starve me to death, but you will never overcome me, you will never tame me into one of the pack-horses of society! I will fight while I have a breath in me, while my heart has left one beat.

The time may come when I shall have to drag myself away like a sick beast to die in the mountains; but if it does, I shall go defying you!

Bah!

—How I wish I could find a rich man who could spare it, and from whom I could steal a thousand dollars. I would turn it into a thousand songs that diamonds could not buy—that would build new empires—and then I would pay the poor rich man back.

—I read a poem of Matthew Arnold's last night:

From the world's temptations,  
From tribulations;  
From that fierce anguish  
Wherein we languish;

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From that torpor deep  
Wherein we lie asleep,  
Heavy as death, cold as the grave,  
Save, oh save!

September 10th.

A man was talking to me to-day about what I am doing. "I should think you would try to get some work more congenial," he said, "some literary work." Yes!—I sell wholesale-paper, and that is bad enough; but at least I do not sell my character.

I to enter into the literary business world! I to forsake my ideals and my standards—to learn to please the public and the men who make money out of the public! Ah, no—let me go on selling paper, and "keep my love as a thing apart—no heathen shall look therein!"

What could I do, besides? And who would give me a chance? I could not review books—I know nothing about modern books, and still less about modern book standards. Neither do I know anything to write that any magazines would want.

—And besides, in four days more, shall I not

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have fifty or sixty dollars? And what shall I want then?

Ah, how I count the days! And when I am out of this place, how I will run away from it! The very books I read while I was there will always be painful to me.

—They will be glad to get rid of me, too. Poor me—I have given up trying to be understood. All these things pass. My business is with God.

Cicero thinks that the remembering of past sorrows is a pleasure. Yes, when the sorrows are beautiful, noble. But I have sorrows in my life, the thoughts of which send through my whole frame—literally and physically—a *spasm*.

September 11th.

I told the bald-headed, grim-visaged senior-partner to-day that I was going to leave. He seemed surprised—offered me a “raise.” I told him I was going out of New York.

—I am a liar. Sometimes I philosophize about that. I am an unprincipled idealist. I have

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not the least respect for fact; I am doing my work. If I could help my work, I would lie serenely in all the six languages I know. And if I were caught, I would say, "Why, yes, of course!"

I think I would rather have a finger cut off than say to a New York business man, "I am a poet!"

September 12th.

I have been forcing myself to read Gibbon, but half of him was all I could stand. I think with astonishment of the reputation of this history, a bare recital of facts, without the least interest or importance, and a recital by the shallowest of men!

The vulgarity of his character is more evident than ever since the repressed parts of his biography have appeared. It is comical. And this man, who has no more understanding of spirituality than a cow, to tell the story of the greatest movement of the soul of man in history!

There is not one gleam of the Christian superstition left in me. I have nothing to fear from the sneers of Gibbon any more than I have from those of Voltaire; but I do not care to hear lec-



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tures on the steam-engine by a man who does not believe in steam.

—Some of these days—the last thing that I can see on the horizon of my future—I am going to write a tragedy called Jesus. The time is past, it seems to me, when an artist must leave alone the greatest art-theme of the ages.

Is it not the greatest? Is there any story in history more sublime than the story of this man? A humble, ignorant peasant he was, and out of the faith of his soul he made the future of the world for centuries! It is a thing that makes your brain reel.

I write it casually, but I have shuddered over it far into the deep, deep night. I have dreamed of two acts—one of them Gethsemane, and the other Calvary.—Poor fool, perhaps I shall never write them!

I have burrowed into that soul, seeking out the truths of it; the truths, as distinguished from the ten thousand fancies of men. When I write that drama I shall deal with those truths.

The climax of the scene in the garden of Gethsemane will be a vision in which looms up

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before him the whole history of Christianity; and that will be the last agony. It will be then that he sweats blood.

That will be something, I think.

September 13th.

To-morrow is the last time I shall ever go into that hellish place! To-morrow is the last time in all my life that I shall ever have to say, "We have this same quality in ninety-pound paper at four sixty-nine!"

Throughout all this thing it seemed to me that when I came out I should no longer have a soul. But it is not so; I shall still keep at it grimly.

September 14th.

And now to-day I make my plans. I must keep near a library; but I shall hunt out a room up-town. There I can be near the Park, and I shall suffer a little less from these hideous noises. I shall go over there and spend every day—find out some place where there are not too many nurse-girls!

I can not begin any other book; I must stand or fall by *The Captive*. I shall be a "*homo unius libri*"!

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But I can not attempt to write again—ever—in these circumstances. It is not that my force is spent—I am only at the beginning of my life, I see everything in the future. But I could not wrestle with these outside things again—it took all my courage and all my strength to do it once.

There is no reason why I should worry about that. I have fifty-six dollars, and I am free for four months, barring accidents. And surely I shall have found some one to love my book by that time!

And so I set to work reading.

September 15th.

A slight preliminary, of course. I spent a ghastly day hunting for a room. I found one in a sufficiently dirty and cheap place, and then I spent another hour finding a man who would take my trunk for a quarter. Having succeeded in that, I walked up there to save five cents; and when the trunk came the driver tried to charge me fifty cents!

Picture me haggling and arguing on the steps—"Didn't know it was so far—Man didn't

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understand"—God knows what else! And then he tries to carry off the trunk—and I rushing behind, looking for a policeman! Again more arguing, and a crowd, of course. At last it appears that I have to pay him what he asks and go down to the City Hall and make my complaint—hadn't told him how many steps there were, etc. So finally I agree to carry it up the steps myself, if he'll only leave it for a quarter!

Next you must picture me breaking my back and tearing my fingers and the damned wall paper—while the damned frowsy-headed landlady yells and the damned frowsy-headed boarders stick out their heads! And so in the end I get into my steaming hot room and shut the door and fall down on the bed and burst into tears.

O God, the stings of this bitter, haunting, horrible poverty! The ghastly weight that has hung about my neck since ever I can remember! Oh, shall I ever be free from it? Shall I ever know what it is to have what I ought to have, to think of my work without the intrusion of these degrading pettinesses?

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They are so infinite, so endless, so hideous! The thing gets to be a habit of my thoughts; my whole nature is steeped and soaked in it—in filthy sordidness! I plot and I plan all the day—I can not buy a newspaper without hesitating and debating—I am like a ragpicker going about the streets!

Sometimes the thing goads me so that I think I must go mad—when I think of the time that I lose, of the power, of the courage! I walk miles when I am exhausted, to save a car-fare! I wear ragged collars and chafe my neck! I stand waiting in foul-smelling grocery shops with crowds of nasty people! I cook what I eat in a half-dirty frying-pan because I can not afford to pay the servant to wash it! So it is that I drag myself about—chafing and goaded—crouching and cringing like a whipped cur!

My God, when will I be free? My God! My God!

—The boarding-houses that I have been in! The choice collection of memories that I have stored away in my mind, memories of boarding-houses! The landladies' faces—the assorted stench—the dark hallways—the gabbling,

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quarreling, filthy, beer-carrying tenants! Oh, I wring my hands and something clutches me in my heart! Let me go! Let me go!

Six times in the course of my life, when I have been starved sick on my own feeding, I have become a "table-boarder"; and out of those six experiences I could make myself another Zola. The infinite variety of animality in those six vile stables—the champing jaws and the slobbering mouths and the rank odor of food! The men who shoveled with their knives or plastered things on their forks as hod-carriers do mortar! The women who sucked in their soup, and the children who smeared their faces and licked their lips and slopped upon the table-cloth! The fat Dutchman who grunted when he ate, and then leaned back and panted! The yellow woman with the false teeth who gathered everything about her on the table! The flashy gentleman with the diamond scarf-pin and the dirty cuffs, who made a tower out of his dirty dishes and then sucked his teeth! O God!

And the loathsome food!—For seven years I have had my nose stamped into this mud, and all in vain; I can still starve, but I can not eat what is not clean.



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—Some day I shall put into a book all the rage and all the hate and all the infamy of these things, and it will be a book that will make your flesh sizzle. And you will wonder why I did it!

It will be better than *Troilus and Cressida*, better than the end of *Gulliver's Travels*—better than *Swellfoot the Tyrant*!

I wonder why nobody else ever reads or mentions *Swellfoot the Tyrant*? I call it the most whole-hearted, thorough-going, soul-satisfying piece of writing in any language that I know.

—When you think of my work you must think of these things! I do not mention them often, but they are never out of my mind. If you should read anything beautiful of mine, you must bear in mind that it is about half a chance that there was a dirty child screaming out in the hall while I wrote it.

September 20th.

It took me a couple of days to realize that I have still not to go down-town. But I have a fine facility in making myself new habits! Just now I am on a four months' studying campaign. It is monotonous—to read about. I get up at six,

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and when I have had my breakfast and fixed a lunch, I go over into the Park. There are only birds and squirrels and a few tramps about then, and it is glorious. Sometimes I am so happy that I do not want to read; later come the squalling children and the hot sun; but I flit about from place to place. I wonder what they think of me!—

Wer bist du, und was fehlt dir!

I read all day, right straight along, and all night, now that it is not too hot. I have always done my reading by periods—I read our nineteenth-century poets that way, sixteen hours a day; I read Shakespeare in three weeks that way, and finished the month with Milton. So when I got German, I read Goethe and Schiller, and Molière and Hugo again.

Now I am reading history; it gives me the nightmare, but one has to read it.

Every night when I put down my book, I flee in thought to my own land as to a city of refuge. A history where everything counts! A history that is not a mad, blind chaos of blood and horror! A history that has other meaning than the drunken lust and the demon pride of a Napoleon or a Louis le Grand!

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—Some day the ages will discern two movements in history: the first, the Christian dispensation, and the second the American.

There is a great deal in knowing how to read, especially with such books as history. I try to read as I write; to lash my author, to make him fill my mind. If he gets sluggish I am soon through with him—I read whole paragraphs in a sentence, and whole volumes in an hour.

September 25th.

The third week of the publisher's month has gone by. God, how cruel is waiting! I wonder if their readers knew how hungry I am if they would not hurry a little!

I say to myself—"There has been enough of this nonsense! Oh, surely there will not be any more, surely these men must take it!"

September 28th.

I still read the literary journals and tingle with excitement thinking of the time when *The Captive* is discussed in them. Can I believe that this book will not stir the world? If I did not believe it, I could not believe anything!

I feel a new interest now in the authors that people talk about. I want to know who they are

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and what they do. And all the time I find myself thinking: "Have I more than this man?—More than that man?" That always throws me into despair, because I am a great admirer; and because I am always hypnotized by the last thing that I read.

But I find very little that is great in modern books. Books are better made now than they ever were before—I mean in the way of literary craftsmanship. As far as form goes, there is no author living who would put together such a hodge-podge as Wilhelm Meister, or *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. But they all imitate each other; they are all mild and tame; there is no real power, no genius among them. They have even forgotten it exists.

I came across this, for instance, the other day in a book of Mr. Howells's:

"In fact, the whole belief in genius seems to me rather a mischievous superstition, and if not mischievous, always, still always, a superstition. From the account of those who talk about it, genius appears to be the attribute of a very potent and admirable prodigy which God has cre-

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ated out of the common for the astonishment and confusion of the rest of us poor human beings. Do they mean anything more or less than the mastery which comes to any man in accordance with his powers and diligence in any direction? If not, why not have an end to the superstition which has caused our race to go on for so long writing and reading of the difference between talent and genius?"

Is not that simply blasphemous?

—Have I genius? Ah, save the word!

How can I know? It is none of my affair—I do my work.

Genius is next to the last and most sacred word we know, next to God; and next to the most abused word. Every man will possess it, in degree proportionate to his vanity. I think if they knew the work and the terror that goes with even a grasp at it, they would not make so free with it.

September 30th.

I wait—I wait for *The Captive*. I do all these other things—I read, I think, I study—but all the while I am merely passing the time. I am waiting for *The Captive* to win me the way. All

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my life hangs on that, I can do nothing else but pray for that—pray for it and yearn for it!

—Yes—and do you know it?—I am sinking down every day! Down, down! The Captive is my high-water mark; where I was when I wrote that I shall never come again in my life—until I am given my freedom and new courage, and can set to work to toil as I did then!

Tell me not about future books, foolish publishers! I have told you I put all that I had and all that I was into that book! And by that book I stand or I fall.

October 3d.

Their month is up. I walked down there to-day and saw them. “The manuscript is now being read—we are awaiting a second report.”

A second! That made my heart go like mad. “Does that mean that the first is favorable?” I asked.

“It means that we are interested in it,” the man answered; “we will let you know shortly.”

Oh this waiting, this waiting!

October 8th.

Ah, God! I came home from the Park to-night, and I saw something that made my heart



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go down like lead. It hurt me so that I cried out!

My manuscript! It was back again!

O Christ! How the sight of it hurt me! There was a letter with it, and my hand shook as I opened it:

“We are returning you the manuscript of *The Captive* by messenger herewith, regretting exceedingly that we can not make you a publishing offer upon it.”

Is not this awful? Oh, it is terrible! It is beyond belief! A whole month gone, and only a note like that to show for it! Four weeks of yearning and hoping—of watching the mail in agony—of struggling and toiling to forget! And then a note like this!

Oh, it drives me wild! I sat to-night in a chair motionless, forgetting that I was hungry, forgetting everything. I looked to the future; I had a feeling that I do not think I ever had in my life before—a horrible, black, yawning despair—a thing so fearful that it took my breath away. Suppose you were standing on a bridge over an

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abyss, and that suddenly it gave way, and in one dreadful instant you realized that you were going down—down like a flash—and that nothing could save you!

So it is to be this, so this is to be my life! I am to send this book to publisher after publisher, and have it come back like this! And meanwhile to spend my time alternating between this room—and the wholesale-paper business!

Yes, I am getting to see the truth! I am a helpless atom, struggling to survive—a glimmering light in the darkness—and I am going out! I am losing—and what shall I do! Who will save me—who will help me?

I was talking to a friend yesterday; he predicted just what happened. "Make one rule," he said, "expect nothing of the world. When you send out a manuscript, *know* that it is coming back!—Otherwise you go mad."

But I should go mad *that* way. Why, what am I to do? How am I to work unless I can get free? I can not live a single day unless I have that hope. And if these blind creatures that make

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money out of books keep on sending my poem back—why, it will kill me—it will turn me into a fool!

October 9th.

I did not go to bed last night until nearly daylight. I was desperate—I was crazy with perplexity. This thing had never occurred to me as the wildest possibility.

I would pace the floor for hours; and then again sink into a stupor. "They send it back! They don't want it!"—I kept on muttering.—And, poor fool that I am, I had pictured to myself how they would read it. I saw the publisher himself glancing at a line of it by chance, and then rushing on. I saw him declaiming it with excited eyes—as I used to declaim it! Poor fool!

—Well, I made another desperate attempt. I wrote last night to another poet that I respect—(the list is not very long). I wrote in the heat of my despair—I told him the whole story. I said that I was crying for the judgment of some one who had love and enthusiasm; some one who had another idea than making money out of it. I told him that I knew he had many such requests, but that he never had one from a man

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who had worked as I had. I pleaded that he need only read a few lines—I begged him to let me hear from him at once.

—And now I shall wait. I can't do anything else but wait!

October 10th.

I tried to read a novel to-day, but I could not fix my attention—I could not do anything.

October 11th.

“I answer your letter at once as you ask me to. In the first place let me assure you of my sympathy. You are at a stage at which all poets—or nearly all—have to pass. Do not let yourself be disheartened—keep at it—and if you work as you write you will come out the victor in the end.

“As to my reading the book, you must believe what I tell you—that I am simply crowded. I have no time to explain, but I could not possibly do it now, nor can I tell you when I could. Go ahead and try the publishers—there are enough of them. And take my advice—do not go on clinging to that book—do not pin all your hope to that—go on—go on! Maybe it is young and exaggerated—what of it? Go on!—Mean-

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while your circumstances seem to you hard—but in future years when you look back at them you will see, as all men see, that it was in that struggle that you got your strength.”

It is a lie! It is a lie! It is silly cant—it is brutal stupidity! What, you try to tell me that it is in contest with these degradations—these horrors—that I am to find my enthusiasm and my hope! Am I a dog that you must kick me to my task?—It is a lie, I say—it is a lie!

If you could not find time to read my work, very well; but you did not have to sugar the pill with silly platitudes such as those. “Go on, go on!” My God, what a mockery! Is it not to go on that I am panting day and night—is it not with the hunger to go on that I am mad?—You fool—do you think I wrote to you because I wanted some one to admire me—because I had the need of praise and encouragement in my work? Give me a year’s freedom—give me two hundred dollars—and I’ll show you how much I care for your praise.

But then you chain me here to your torture stake, and bid me “Go on! Go on!”

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—And it is in that struggle that I am to get my strength! That sentence burns in my blood, it stings me! What is this struggle that you prate about, anyway? And what do you mean by “getting my strength?” Did I get my strength to write *The Captive* that day when those fish-wives moved in next door to me? Did I get my strength to dream of my new work that day when I was chasing after an express-driver to save a quarter? Do I get it now when I am sitting here panting and ill with a headache, and with despair, and with lack of food? Damn such asininity, I say!

What do you mean, I cry—what do you mean? Would it have helped Kant to solve the problems of the universe to have had a swarm of mosquitoes buzzing about his face? Would it have helped Beethoven to compose his symphonies to have had a dance hall over his head? What ghastly farce it is! That a poet is helped to realize his dreams and his joys in this hellish, reeking, market-place of a city! Why, I tell you, sir, that every hour that I have lived in it I have known that I have paid out unmeasured powers of my soul! And I know now, as every other poet knows, that when I am



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out of it I come with what pittance of strength I have been able to save from the horrible ordeal. Do you think that I am a fool that I do not know what inspires me and what degrades me? Why, sir, I sit here and watch my spirit wither like a frost-bitten plant!

Such things bring tears of indignation into my eyes.

—As a matter of simple reference, if any one wants to know what I imagine helps a poet—it is to live in the woods, to think and to dream, to read books and hear music, to eat wholesome food—and, above all, to escape from hot asphalt streets, cable-car gongs, and flaring advertisements of soaps and cigars.

October 12th.

I had an adventure to-day. I woke up with a headache, dull, sick, discouraged. I cared no more about anything. I got out *The Captive* and made ready to take it to the publishers.

And then I thought I would read a little of it.

I sat down in the corner—I forgot the publishers—I sat reading—reading—and my heart beat fast, and my hands shook, and all my soul rose in one hymn of joy!

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Oh world, do your worst, I do not care! You may turn me off—but the gates of heaven are open! I will go on—I will bear anything—bear all things! I will wait and live and learn meanwhile, knowing with all my soul what this book is and what it must bring. So long as I can read it, I can wake my soul again.

It is at the publishers'. I will read books meantime and be happy.

I saw a manuscript clerk this time. She was very airy. I fear I am a sad-looking poet—my buttonholes are beginning to wear out. "We never read manuscripts out of turn," she said. "It will take them three or four weeks."

—Yes, good poet, that is my answer to you. I can not take your advice—I will cling to my book—I will pin all my hopes to it! I will toil and strive for it, I will haunt men with it, I will shout it from the housetops. No other book—no future book—*this* book! It is a great book—a great book—it is—*it is!*

I am not ignorant of the price it costs to do that; it is my fate that I have to pay it. I can see, for instance, how Wordsworth paid it—

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Wordsworth, our greatest, our noblest poet since Milton. He had his sacred inspiration, and the world laughed at it; and so, grimly, systematically, he set to work to teach them—to say to all men—to say to himself—to say day and night—“*It is poetry! It is great poetry! It is—it is!*”

And of course at last he made them believe him; and when they believed him, he—Wordsworth—was a matter-of-fact, self-centered, dull and poor old man.

—It all rests with you, good world! How long must I stand here and knock at the door?

October 18th.

I am reading, reading—and trying to forget meanwhile! When I get through my long list of histories I shall go back to my Greek dramatists again. My Greek is getting better now—I expect to have a happy time with Aristophanes.—He is the funniest man that ever lived, Aristophanes.

Then I am coming back to read the French novelists. There are many of them I do not know. (I do not expect to like them—I do not like Frenchmen.)

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October 22d.

I was glancing to-day over a volume of Shelley's, and the memory of old glories thrilled in me. Ah, let me not forget what Shelley was to me in my young struggling days! Let me not forget while I am wrestling with a dull world—let me not forget what a poet is to young men hungering for beauty! Let me not forget!

Yes, it is to such that my appeal is, it is by such that I will be judged! It is for such that I toil! For hearts upon whom the cold world has not laid its hand! For the poets and the seekers of all ages! Oh come to me, poets and seekers of all ages—dwell in my memory and strengthen my soul! That I go not down altogether—that I be not overcome by the dull things about me!

These thoughts are not becoming to a reader of history. But I am not a good reader of history—the old beasts are still growling within me. Something starts a longing in me—I cry out that I am getting dull, that I am going down, that I am putting off—I, who never put off before! And so the old storms rise and the great waves come rolling again!

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October 25th.

I read that over just now. Yes, it is this that I dread. I dread the habit of not striving! When that becomes my habit it is my death! And here I sit, day by day—doing just the thing I dread! “Let me go *now!*” something shouts in me. “*Now*—or I shall never go at all!”

Oh, if I could find some word to tell men the terror of that thought!

—It is my life—that is what it is! To obey this thing within me, to save this thing within me, to *find* this thing within me—that is my life!

It is a demon thing—it is a thing that has lifted me up by the hair of my head and shaken me—that has glared at me with the wild eyes of a beast—that has beaten me like a storm of wind and struck me down upon the ground! It shakes me now—it shakes me all the time—it makes me scream with pain—incoherently, frantically. “Oh save me!—Spare me!—Let me go!”

I rave, you say—yes, I know. That is because I can not say what I feel. But what matters it?

Sometimes I say to myself, “I put all that in *The Captive*, and men have not heard it! And

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now, what can I do that they *will* hear—shall I have to go out in the streets and scream? Or what other desperate thing is there? ”

—Mark this, oh you world that I can not make hear me! Some desperate thing I shall do—I will not sit here and be respectable always!

—I wonder what locusts taste like, and just where one could find wild honey.

October 29th.

I sang a song to-day—a mad, mad song! I wish I could bring it back. It came to me unexpectedly, while I was kneeling by the bed, thinking.

I have forgotten it all now—one always forgets his best songs. I have not a line of this one, except the chorus:

For I am lord of a thousand dollars!

So it is that my best songs go. I can count them on my fingers. But I have not yet learned how precious they are—that is why I lose them.

—Do you remember that time on the great cliffs by the ocean? There was nothing left but the ending again—

Oh bear me away in thy bosom,  
Thou wind of the mountain high!



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November 2d.

I am not always as I write here—I am not always angry. I have my tender moments, when I see my woe as the world's woe—above all the poverty. Oh let me always have a tender heart for the poor!

November 6th.

I have a distant relative in this city, an old gentleman who belongs to clubs and is what is known as a "man of the world." He has quite a sense of humor—is famous for good stories. He told me that he was interested in me—that he would be glad to find a place for me in life, if I would only get over my youthful follies. It has been years since I saw him, but I can still hear him.

The last words he ever said to me were these—said with his quiet, amused smile: "Never mind, my boy, leave it to time. You needn't argue with me—just leave it to time, and it'll come out all right."

Never have I sunk into a fit of despair that I have not thought of that; and the quiet smile has become the sneer of an imp. It has become all the world watching me, and knowing full well the issue; wise world!

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That memory has never yet lost its power to make me grip my hands suddenly. "So! And my life has no other purpose, then, than to point a moral for a rich clubman!"

Leave it to time! Leave it to time! O God, what a sentence that is—so savage—and so true! Leave it to the long weary days that come one after another—that never tire—that never are beaten—that never are less—never faster—never slower—that wear you out as water wears a stone! Leave it to time! Say nothing, fear nothing; leave it to time! Leave it to the hours of dulness, the hours of sickness, the hours of despair! Leave it to failure piled upon failure, to insult piled upon insult, to rebuff upon rebuff, to sneer upon sneer! Leave it to the endless, never-ceasing sight of ugliness; the endless, never-ceasing sight of selfishness; of pettiness, emptiness, heartlessness, hatefulness! Leave it to heat and to cold, to dust and to dirt, to hunger and penury, to headache and heartache, and bitter, bitter loneliness! Leave it to time! Leave it to time!—*Oh my Father in heaven!*

November 8th.

—What am I doing? I am reading books full

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of facts—I am reading books that do not make me wretched. I am *not* reading poetry.

I am leaving it to time!

November 10th.

It has been four weeks yesterday! I have been expecting to hear from the last publishers every day for a week. I have been trembling while I watched each mail. I have more than a hope that these publishers will take it—they publish a deal of poetry.

But I have been practising my friend's plan, I have been saying to myself all day: "You might as well know that it is coming back. What is the use of trying to deceive yourself?"

It has been four months since I finished *The Captive*! If I had known then what I know now, I do not believe I could ever have written a line of it.

What do I know *now*?

—I know more than I care to own to myself. There is a deadly growth taking root in the depths of my soul.

November 13th.

It is two months to-day since I gave up my last place. I have gotten along on just three dol-

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lars a week, including everything. I find it is not possible to do better than that, there are so many odds and ends one needs. I have spent twenty-seven dollars. I have twenty-nine dollars. That means I can try two, or possibly three, publishers—after this one.

November 16th.

My method did make it easier after all. The letter came this morning.

“ We have read with care the manuscript of *The Captive* which you have offered us. We are pleased to be able to tell you that we have found it a very fine piece of work, but we are sorry to say that our previous experience with publications of this character does not lead us to believe that we could make a success of it.

“ We are holding MS. subject to your order.”

I did a desperate thing to-day—two of them. First I had to go and get the manuscript, so I asked to see the publisher. I sat down and looked straight into his face and said: “ How is a man who is trying to write what is fine to keep alive if the publishers won't publish what he writes? ”

He was very kind—he seemed to be inter-

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ested. He explained that a publisher who published books that the public did not want would be driven out of business in a year. Then he said he knew many who were facing the same problem as I; that there was nothing to do but write for the magazines and the papers, and that it was a bitter shame that society made no provision for such men. "Your work is as noble and sincere as work can be," he said, "but I do not believe that you will find a publisher in this country to undertake it, unless there be one who feels wealthy enough to do it as a service to literature and a labor of love."

That made me turn white. I got my manuscript and I went out on the street, and the houses reeled about me. "So," I said, "and that settles it!"

As I walked along I stared into the future. It seemed very clear all of a sudden.

I thought it all out. "No one will publish *The Captive*," I said, "and no one would heed it if it were published. Therefore I have but one question to face, Have I the strength to go on, living as I have lived, distracted and tormented as I have been—and still piling up new emotions

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in my soul, daring new efforts, reaching new heights, producing new books? I can have no idea that my second work will be any more available than my first; on the contrary, I know that it would be just what *The Captive* is, only more so. Therefore, perhaps it will be ten years—perhaps it will be twenty years—before men begin to pay any heed to what I have written! And so there is the question, Have I the strength to go on in that way—have I the strength to face that future? ”

Then I grew faint and had to lean against a railing. *I knew that I could not do that!*

It is no question of what I will do! It is a question of what I *can* do! I am weakened and sick with the yearning that I have in me already. My last “business” experience drove me mad. And I am to go on, I am to rouse new hunger, new passion, new agony in my soul! Why, the work that I have dreamed of next is so hard and so far-away that I hardly dared even whisper it! It would take years and years of toiling! And I am to do it here in this seething city—to do it while I sell wholesale-paper—to do it while I am sick for lack of food! I can not do it! I *can* not!



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I went home, and I was crazy; so it was that I did my second desperate thing.

I sat down and wrote a letter to Mr. ——. I wrote a letter—I can not see how it could fail to stir the soul of any man. I told him how I had toiled—I told him how for four long months I had waited in agony—I told him what the publishers had said to me. I begged him—I implored him—for the sake of the unuttered message that cried out day and night in my soul—not to throw the letter aside—to read it—to give me a chance to talk to him. I said: “I will live in a hut, I will cook my own food, I will wear the clothes of a day laborer! If I can only be free—if I can only be free to be an artist! I could do it, all of it, for two hundred dollars a year; and I could win the battle, I know, if I had but three years. I am desperate as I write to you—I look ahead and I can see only ruin; and not ruin for myself—I do not mind that—but ruin for my art! I can tell you what that means to me in but one way—I ask you to read my book. I have put all my soul into that book—I will stake my all upon it. If you will only read it, you will see what I mean—you will see why I have written you this letter. You will see that it is not a beg-

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gar's letter, but a high challenge from an artist's soul."

So there is one chance more. I do not see how he can refuse, and if he will only read the manuscript, I will be safe, I think.

November 20th.

I have done nothing but wait for four days, but I have not heard from him yet. To-day I made up my mind that I would take the manuscript to another publisher's meanwhile. He is probably busy, and may not answer for a long while; and I can get the manuscript from a publisher at any time.

November 24th.

Still I have not heard anything from Mr. ——. My soul was full of hope again, but it is sinking down as before. Is he not going to answer me at all?—Can it be that he has not even read my letter?

November 26th.

I wrote to him again to-day, inquiring. If he does not answer that, I shall suppose his secretary threw it away.

There is nothing weakens my soul like this endless waiting. I wander around desolate, help-

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less. I can not fix my mind on anything. Oh, the shame of it!

November 30th.

I could not give up that hope yet. It seemed to me so terrible that of all the men of wealth in this city there should not be one willing to help me save my message.—I wrote to-day the same letter to a clergyman who I know is wealthy, and who I believe would be interested in my work.

December 2d.

“I have received your letter, and I regret very much that I can not grant the request you make. The pressure upon my time is such that I can not possibly undertake to read your book. There would be no use in my doing so, anyhow, for I tell you frankly it seems to me the situation you are in is just what you need. My advice to you is to be a man and face it. I do not see any reason why one person should be set free from the labor which all of us have to share; and I assure you that you are entirely mistaken if you think that an artist has nothing to expect but ruin from contact with the world, and with suffering and toiling humanity.”

Isn't that a slap in the face for you?

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Great God, I think that is the most insulting thing that has ever happened to me in all my days. "Set free from the labor which all of us have to share!"—What do you think I am—a tramp, or a loafer, you hound!

"A high challenge from an artist's soul!"

I think I never had so much hatred in my heart in all my life as I have to-day. Oh, my God, what a thing this world is! What stupid, blind brutality, what hideous vulgarity! This man a *clergyman*! And this is his faith, his nobility, his understanding!

Why, I came out of the forest with my naked heart in my hands! I came out quivering with emotion, melting with love and with trust for all men! I came all sensitive and raw—hungering for sympathy and kindness! And oh, my soul!—my God!—you have beaten me and kicked me as if I were a filthy cur!

Had I not offered up my heart for a sacrifice? Had I not burned it with fire? Had I not made all my being one consecration? And all for men, for men! For men I had torn myself—lashed myself—killed myself—for men I had forgotten what self was—yes, literally that—forgotten what self was! So little self had I left that I was will-

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ing to ask favors! So much consecration had I, so much trust, that I would beg! I had wept—I had suffered—I had starved! I had dreamed and sung, toiled until I set fire to my very brain! And you have beaten me and kicked me as if I were a filthy cur!

Those thoughts turn my whole soul into one wild curse! Have done with laying bare your heart to men, have done with telling your life to men! Why should you go on trying to be a poet, go on putting your secret soul into books, to be spurned at by the rabble? Your soul is your own—it is your God's—and what have the rabble to do with it! And all its tenderness! all its shrinking ecstasy! all its holiest consecration! —You will take them out to sell them to the rabble!

When will you get back into yourself, you fool? When will you have learned your lesson, and let this hellish world boot you out of its way no more? Let ever any man know a gleam of your heart again!—see one trace of your joy!

—And I came to it on my knees—to this world—crouching, cringing, begging! Oh, oh! —I scream it—Oh!

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—And after that I sank down by the bed and hid my face and sobbed: “ Oh, Shelley! Oh, my Shelley! ”

December 3d.

—I saw myself a business man to-day, clearing a path for myself! But it does not last—I am not that kind of a man. My folly is my being—rest assured that I shall climb back to the heights again where I am willing to bear any insult.

But it will be a long time before I write any more letters. I have come to understand the world's point of view.

I suppose busy men get thousands of letters from cranks; they will get no more from me.

December 5th.

I was reading an essay on Balzac to-day. I read about Balzac's fondness for *things*; and I put the book down and spent an hour of perplexity. I fear I am a very narrow person in my sympathies and understandings. Why should a man care about *things*! About all sorts of houses and furniture, and pictures, and clothes, and jewels!

I can understand a man's caring about love and joy and aspiration. But *things*! I can



understand a child's caring about things, or a fool's caring; I see millions of such; but an artist? A thinker? A *man*?

I am reading novels nowadays—reading all sorts of things that *entertain*. I have not read a poem for a long time, I have no interest in reading unless I can go with it.

I have been studying some of the French novelists—some of Maupassant yesterday. What a strange creature is a Frenchman! A nervous, hysterical, vain, diseased creature!

“The Gallic disease!” Let that be a phrase.

The Gallic disease is this: to see only one thing in life, to know only one purpose, to understand only one pleasure; to have every road lead to that, every thought, every phrase. To know that every character in a book is thinking it; to know that every man who is introduced is looking for a woman! And that as soon as he finds her, they must forthwith—whatever be their age, rank, character, and position at the moment—begin to burn with unclean desires!

That is what one might call the *convention* of

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French fiction. It gets very monotonous when you are used to it; it takes all of the interest out of the story. For there is but one ending to such a story.

One's whole being is lowered by contact with that incessant animal appeal.

December 8th.

I have discovered another trouble—as if I did not have enough! I am to suffer from indigestion! It plagues me continuously—I can not do anything for an hour after a meal, no matter what simplest thing I have eaten.

And so all through my life I am to be hindered in my work by having to wrestle with this handicap! Just as if I had not been a clean man, but some vulgar *bon vivant*.

December 10th.

This is my fifth publisher. They said they thought it would take two weeks, but it has been three already, and they have not even answered my letter of inquiry. I see you can put no reliance on them in the matter of time.

December 11th.

In two days more it will be three months since I gave up my situation. I count my little hoard

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day by day, as a castaway might, or a besieged garrison. I have begun to try to get along on cheap foods again—(that is the reason of my indigestion). Yesterday I burned a mess of oatmeal, and now I shall live on burned oatmeal for I know not how long. I was cooking a large quantity to save time.

I count my store. I have come the last month on eleven dollars! I have been doing my own washing, and reading the newspapers at a library. I buy nothing but food—chiefly bread and milk and cereals. Why is it that everything that is cheap has no taste?

Sometimes I am angry because I can not have anything good to eat, but I only write my dignified sentiments here.

I am getting down to the limit again; I sit shuddering. I shall have to get some work again; I can not bear to think of it! What shall I do? If I go to that slavery again it will be the death of my soul, for I have no hope, and I can not fight as I did before.

And I can only try one or two publishers more. Oh, take it! Take it!

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December 14th.

I went down to see them to-day. The manuscript mislaid—very sorry—had written readers to examine it at once—expecting report any instant—will write me—etc.

And so I walked home again.

Yes, elegant ladies and gentlemen, I am a poor poet; and my overcoat is out at one elbow, and I am sick. I look preoccupied, too; would you like, perhaps, to know what is in my mind? I will tell you five minutes of it to-day:

“Bang! Bang! Look out of the way there, you fool!—Use Casey’s Corn Cure!—Extry! Extry! Evening Slop-Bucket and Swill-Barrel, six o’clock edition!—And it was at seventy-two and the market—Cab! Cab!—Try Jones’s Little Five-cent Cigars!—Brown’s Élite Tonsorial and Shaving Parlors!—Have you seen Lucy Legs in the High Kicker? The Daily Hullabaloo says—Shine, boss?—But she wouldn’t cut it on the bias, because she thought—Read the Evening Slop-Bucket! Five hundred million copies sold every year! We rake all the mud-gutters and it only costs you one cent! The Slop-Bucket is the pa-

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per of the people!—Move along, young man, don't block up the passage! Bang! Bang! Hurry up there, if you want to get aboard—Come along, my honey-baby girl!(hand-organ)—If you will try Superba Soap—Simpkins's Whisky is all the rage!—Isaac Cohenstein's Cash Clothing Store, Bargains in Gents' Fall Overcoats! Look at these! Walk in, sir! Cash! Cash!—The most elegant topaz brooches, with little—Read the Daily Swill-Barrel!—Extry! Extry! He Cut Her Throat with a Carving-Knife!—Bang! Bang!—Toodles' Teething Sir-up—Look at my elegant hat with the flamingo on it!—O'Reilly's Restaurant—walk in and gorge yourself, if you can pay us. Walk in!—Get out of the way there!—Have you read the Pirate's Pledge! The Literary Sensation—Cash! Cash!—Just come and see our wonderful display of newly imported—Smith and Robinson, Diamonds and Jewelry, latest and most elegant—Use Tompkins's Tooth Powder! *Use Tompkins's Tooth Powder!!* USE TOMPKINS'S—Read the Evening Slop-Bucket! We rake all the mud-gutters!—Murphy's Wines and Liquors—Try Peerless Cocktails—Levy's High-Class Clothing Emporium!—Come in and buy something—any-

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thing—we get down on our knees—we beg you!—Cab, sir? Cab!—Bargains! Bargains!—Cash! Cash!—*Yein, yein, yein!*”

So it keeps up for hours! And I put my fingers in my ears and run.

December 17th.

To-day I happened to read in one of the magazines an article on a literary subject by a college professor of some reputation. It was a fine piece of work, I thought, very true; and I got to thinking of him, wondering if *he* might not be the man.

I have no hope that these last publishers will take the book, and so I made up my mind to write to him.

I wrote what I had written to all the others; I told him how I had struggled, and how I was living. Perhaps he is less busy than the rest.

December 19th.

The manuscript came back to-day. The letter was simple—the old, meaningless form. I am waiting to hear from the professor.

December 20th.

“I reply to your letter somewhat against my rule—chiefly because of what you tell me about



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your circumstances. I will read your manuscript if you still think it worth while to send it to me; but I must tell you at the outset that I consider the chances very unfavorable, as regards my finding the work what you believe it. I assure you that the literary situation is not in the least what you picture it; the book-market was never more wide-awake than it is now, the publishers are all as eager as possible for the least sign of new power; and besides that, the magazines afford outlet—not only for talent, but for mediocrity as well. You are entirely mistaken in your idea that literary excellence is not equivalent to commercial availability. If you could write one paragraph as noble as the average of Dr. —, or one stanza as excellent as the average of Professor —, you would find an instant and hearty welcome.

“Moreover, I believe that you are entirely wrong in your ideas of what you need. You will not make yourself a great artist by secluding yourself from men—go out into the world, young man, go out into the world and see what men are!

“As I say, it is not my rule to answer letters such as yours. The cry of the suffering is in the

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air every instant, if we heeded it we should never get our work done. But I am willing to read your poem, if this letter has not chilled your ardor."

—Last night I read *The Captive* again, and it brought the tears into my eyes; and so my ardor is not chilled, good professor—and I will send you the poem.

—But as for going out into the world—I think I am learning what men are pretty fast!

December 23d.

My poem stirs me, but it does not last. My whole habit of mind seems to me to be changed—a deep, settled melancholy has come over me; I go about mournful, haunted. I read—but all the time I am as if I had forgotten something, and as if half my mind were on that. I have lost all my ardor—I look back at what I was, and it brings the tears into my eyes. It is gone! It is gone! It will not ever come back!

And each day I am drawing nearer to the rapids—to the ghastly prospect of having 'to drag myself back to work!

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Oh my God, what shall I do?—tell me anything, and I will do it! Give me a hope—any hope—even a little one!

The last day I can stretch my miserable pittance to is the first of February.

December 25th.

Christmas Day—and I have no news, except that I am hungry, and that I am sitting in my room with a blanket around me, and with a miserable cold in my head.

It is the agony of an unheated room, an old acquaintance of mine, that comes with each bitter winter. I live in a house full of noisy people and foul odors; and so I keep my door shut while I try to read, and so my room is like a barn.

I could not accomplish anything to-day—I could not read. I felt like a little child. I wanted nothing but to hide my head on some one's shoulder and sob out all my misery.

I am nothing but a forlorn child, anyway, lost in this great, cruel city.

—I am not much at pathos; but it was Christmas night, and I had one kind of cold in my head, and another kind in my feet.

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December 27th.

I tell you that my salvation was my impatience! My salvation was that I wasted not an instant, that I fought—that I fought! And each hour that I am forced to submit—that I am forced to endure and be still—that is an hour of ruin! It was those fearful seven weeks that began it—and now I shall have to go back to that again! Oh my God, how can I bear it? What can I do? The pain of it heaps itself up in my soul—I am desperate—I will go mad! Tell me what to do! Tell me what to do!

December 28th.

I had a strange adventure to-night, a long, long adventure. I was free for once in my life! Free and glorious—and delivered from earth! It happened all in a dream; I sat crouching in the corner, thinking.

I had been walking down the street during the day and had seen a flower in a window, and had been made happy for a minute, thinking of last spring. My step had grown light, and I had forgotten the street around me. But then I had heard two little girls, sitting in a doorway, whisper excitedly: "Oh, look—he's laughing!" And

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instantly all my soul had shrunk up, and my dream had fled, and I had hurried past and turned the corner.

Is it not a strange thing? I mused—this as I sat by the window—that deep instinct of secrecy—that cowardice! Why is it that I would die before I would let any man see the life of my soul? What are these people to me? I know them not at all, and never shall. But I crouch back—I put on a mask—yes, think of it, I even *give up* the life of my soul, rather than that any man should see me acting differently than himself!

Somehow all at once that thought took hold of me with an overwhelming power—I saw the truth as I had never seen it before in my life. I saw how we live in society; and how social convention and triviality have us in such a grasp that it never even dawns upon us that the laws it dictates are not eternal and necessary! “You must be dignified, and calm, and commonplace,” say social convention and triviality.

—But I am *not* dignified—I am *not* calm!—I am *not* commonplace!

Well, then, you must *seem* so. You must

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walk quietly; you must gaze around indifferently; you must keep a vacant face; you must try to look innocent of a thought. If you can't manage that—if you really want to think—why then you must flee away to the woods, where you are sure no one will come upon you and find you out. And if you can't do that—why then there's nothing for you to do but give up thinking, give up living, become like everybody else!

That idea shook me all of a sudden, it made me quite wild—it made me dig my nails into my hands. It was the truth—I saw that—it was the truth! Here I was, a miserable, pining, starving wretch—and for no reason in the world but that I was a coward, but that I was a coward—a blind fool! Because I had not let the empty-headed and sodden, the placid and smug, the fat and greasy citizens of our great metropolis, tell *me*—the servant of the muses—how I ought to look, how I ought to act, what I ought to be! The very breath of my body is prayer—is effort—is vision; to dwell in my own light, to behold my own soul, to know my own truth—that is my one business in this world! To assert my own force—to be what I like—that is my duty, that is my



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hope, my one hope in all the world! And I do not, I can not, I dare not do it! I am sick and starved and dying, and I crouch in corners while I pray for help, and if a gleam of sunshine comes from a flower to me, it goes because a child sees me laughing!

I sat burning with the rage of that. What am I to do? I cried. How is it to be changed? Shall I live my life in spite of all men?

And then I heard one of my devils—my commonplace devil—say, “But people would think you were crazy!”

“What do I care what people think?” I burst out.

Then came another of my devils—my facetious devil—and he made me laugh. “By all means,” said he, “let us get together a few eager poets, and establish a Society for the Propagation of Lunacy. Let us break down these conventions and confound the eyes of the fat and greasy citizens, and win freedom for our souls at any price. Let us wear strange clothes, and recite our poetry upon the streets. Let us——”

But I was not in a mood for my facetious devil—I flung him aside and sprang up and fled out to the street (this in thought, of course).

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What do I need with others? I exclaimed—with others to help me dare? This has to do with *me!* And it has to do with me *now*—with this moment! Am I to give up and let myself go down for such a phantom as this! For such a dread as that wooden-headed men and women will think me “queer”! Am I to stay in a prison such as that—to be bound by a chain such as *that?* I—I, who go about trying to persuade myself that this world is nothing to me—that this world is nothing to any one—that it is a phantom—that the soul is truth! When I say that the soul is truth, do I mean it? Do I *mean* it? And if I do mean it, will I act by it—will I act by it now—*now*, while I see it? Will I fling off this nightmare, will I tear my way through these wrappings that have choked me? Will I say, once and for all time, that I will be myself—that I will live my life—and that no man shall stop me—that no man shall make me afraid? Will I take the battle upon me and win it—win it *now*—fling off the last rag of it—put the world straight behind me—*now—here?* Spread the wings of my soul and take my flight into the far spaces of myself! And dwell there—stay there—hold to the task and give it not up though it kill me—now—*now!*

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These thoughts took hold of me—they made my brain reel—and I cried aloud in excitement. I had not been so much awake since the day I came out of the woods! I said the word—I said it—the mad word that I had not heard for six long months—that I had not heard since I wrote the last lines of my poem and came back to the haunts of men. And I clinched my hands, and stamped upon the ground, and shouted: “Come on! Come on!”—to the legions of my spirit. And it was like the taking flight of a great swarm of birds within me—a rushing of wings and a surging upward, a singing for joy as of a symphony. And there was singing in my soul, the surge of it caught me—and I waved my arms and went striding on, shouting still, “Come on! Come on!——

“Now! *now!* We will have it out with them—here—*here!* We will fight our fight and win it, and they shall not turn us back—no, by God, they shall not! And they may take it as they please—my soul is free—*free* once again! Away! *Away!*”

And I felt the breeze of the mountains about me, and heard the rushing of the storm-wind and the trampling of the thunder. There awoke the

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old rush in my heart, the old Valkyrie music that flies over the forests and mountains. And I laughed as I sang it; I heard the war-horses neighing, and yelled to them—faster and faster—higher and higher—away from earth and all men!—

And then suddenly I felt some one seize me by the shoulder and shake me, and heard a gruff voice say: "Here! Here! What's the matter with you?" And I stared, half-dazed. It was a big policeman, and around me I saw a sea of staring faces, wild-eyed children, women gazing in fright, boys jeering; and the windows were filled with yet another crowd!

"What's the matter with you?" demanded the policeman again. "Are you drunk, or crazy?"

And then I realized. But the fire was still blazing in me, and a wild rage whirled over me. "Then it is by this that I am to be stopped!" I gasped. "By *this*! It is not possible after all, it seems; and I'm to be dragged back after all!—By Heaven, we'll see!"

And so I gave the cry again—the cry of the

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Valkyrs that is madness to me! Do you not hear it?—and I was away again and free!

What does a man want for his soul, if it be not just to strive, and to be resisted, and still to strive? What difference makes anything else—time, place or conditions? I was myself again—and what else did I care about? I felt the policeman take me by the collar and march me down the street; but I hardly knew that—I was on the mountains, and I laughed and sang. The very hatefulness of what was about me was my desperation—I would make head against such things or I would die in the attempt! I would be free!—I would live! I would live my life; and not the life of these people about me! I would fight and win, I would hold fast my heart, I would be true though the heavens fell! I would have it out, then and there, as I said—I would not come back to earth until I was master of myself.

And so when I stood in the station-house and the sergeant asked me my name, I said: “Desire is my name, and the soul is my home!” And then because they shook me and worried me, I stretched forth my arms and cried out: “O God, my Father—thou who art my help and my



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life—thou soul of my soul—shall I go back for these things?—Shall I fear for these things? No, no—while I have life I will not! I will live for the truth, I will be crushed no longer!”

They led me to a cell, and when I heard the door shut I laughed like a madman for joy. And then—ah, then—who can tell it? They came—all my angels and all my demons! All my muses and all my nymphs! And the bases of the earth rocked and the heavens danced and sang; and I mounted on the wings of the ages, and saw the joys of the systems and the dancing of the young suns. Until I could bear it no more, and fell down and sobbed, and cried out to my soul that it was enough, enough!

—And afterward I sat there on the stone floor, and ate bread and water and ambrosial peace; and a doctor came in to see me, and asked me who I was. And I laughed—oh, who ever laughed like that? And I said, “*I am the author of The Captive!*”

He left me and I sat there, shaking my head and pounding the stone floor for joy. And I sang again, and sang again. Yes, the author of The Captive! And captive myself, and free at last!



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It was far into the night when I stopped singing; and then I lay down and never before had I known such peace; for I had found the way—I had seen the light—I was delivered from all fear and dulness for the rest of my days! I was so excited I could not sleep—when I fell asleep at last it was from sheer exhaustion.

And when they roused me the next morning I bounded to my feet like a shot, and shouted to my soul, and was up and away through the forest like a startled deer again! They tried their very best to catch me, but they could not. I had not lived in the woods for nothing, I knew the paths, I knew where the mountains were. And when they thought they had me in court, I was on the very summits—and laughing and drunk with the mountain air!

I have a keen sense of humor,—and of course I am never so drunk that I do not know I'm drunk, and know just what I'm drunk about—else how could I write poems about it? Do you think that when Shakespeare cried out his “Blow ye winds and crack your cheeks!” he did not know just what he was saying? Ah!—And when I saw all these queer little men about me, staring and wondering—and so solemn!—I

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laughed the inextinguishable laughter of Olympus, and shouted so that they dragged me out of court in a hurry.

And then there came the end! They took me to the insane asylum, and I sat down on the floor of a cell and gazed at myself in amazement and panted: So there *is* a way you can live, after all! There *is* a way you can make them support you! There *is* a way you can do all your work in peace, and worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! I could scarcely believe it all—it took half an hour for me to realize it. And then I shouted that I was saved!—and fell to work at shaping that mad Song of the West Wind I had been so full of.

And then suddenly I heard a muffled voice say: “What in the dickens are you making all that rumpus for?” And I stared about me and saw that I was still crouching by the window in my room! And I shrank back and quivered with rage, because I knew that I had been making a noise and that some one out in the hall had been listening to me!

And that was the end of my long adventure.

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December 30th.

“ I am pleased to be able to tell you that your poem is a great deal better than I expected to find it. I am forced to write briefly by reason of pressure of business; but you have very considerable literary gifts. The work is clearly made whole of sincerity; it shows a considerable command of expression, and a considerable understanding of style. It has qualities of imagination and of emotional insight, and is obviously the fruit of a wide reading. But besides these things, it is exactly as I expected, and as I told you—the work is very narrow in the range of its appeal; you can not in the least blame the publishers for declining it, because it is true that very few people would care for it. My own judgment is hardly capable in the matter, because I myself am not an idealist. Recording my own opinion, I found the poem monotonous, and not especially interesting; but then, I say that of much that some other people consider great poetry.

“ My advice to you is just what it was before—that you go out into the world and become acquainted with life. Not knowing you personally, I could not counsel you definitely, but I should think that what would benefit you most would be

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a good stiff course in plain, every-day newspaper reporting. Newspaper reporters have many deficiencies, but at least they learn to keep in touch with their audiences, and to write in a way that takes hold of the people. You may not welcome this advice—but we seldom welcome what is good for us.”

I am not dead yet, and I have not lost the power of getting angry. Such things as that do me good, they make me fight, they get all my soul in arms. Great God, the blindness, the asininity of it!

It is enough if you can classify a man; give him a name—and then it's all out of the way. If he have faith and fire and aspiration and worship—and you have not—why, say that he is an idealist, and that you are something else, and let it go at that.

December 31st.

The poem came back to-day, and I trudged off to another publisher's—the sixth. I have no hope now, however; I send it as a matter of form.

I shudder at the prospect of to-morrow's coming; for it will be just a month more to the time I said I should have to go to work!

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And New Year's day—my soul, if I had foreseen this last New Year's! I thank Heaven for that blessing, at least.

Who are these men that I should submit to their judgments? These men and their commonplace lives—are they not that very world out of which I have fought my way, by the toil of nights and days?—And now I must come back and listen to their foolish judgments about my song!

—You felt what was in it, you poor, stupid man! But it did not take you with it, for you are not a poet; you have not kept the holy fire burning, you are not still “strenuous for the bright reward.” And so you found it monotonous! Some men find nature monotonous. And some men find music monotonous.

January 5th.

Two days ago I was reading *Menschen und Werke*, by Georg Brandes. I was glancing over an essay on Friedrich Nietzsche, and I came upon some things that made my heart throb:—

“This man [Nietzsche's ideal] takes willingly upon himself the sorrow of speaking the truth. His chief thought is this: A happy life is an impossibility; the highest that man can attain is a

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heroic life, a life in which, amid the greatest difficulties, something is striven for which, in one way or other, proves for the good of all. To what is truly human only the true men can lift us, those who seem to have come into being through a leap of nature, the thinkers and discoverers, the artists and producers, and those who achieve more through their being than their doing; the noble, the good in a great sense, those in whom the genius of the good works. These men are the goal of history. Nietzsche formulates the sentence 'Humanity shall labor continually at this, to beget solitary great men—and this and nothing else is its task.'—

“Here Nietzsche has reached the final answer to his question ‘What is Culture?’ For upon this rest the fundamental principles of Culture, and the duties which it imposes. It lays upon me the duty to place myself actively in relation to the great human ideals. Its chief thought is this: To every one who will look for it and partake of it, it sets the task; to labor in himself and outside of himself at the begetting of the thinker and the artist, the truth-loving and the beauty-loving man, the pure and good personality—and therewith at the fulfilment of nature. . . .



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“ In our day a so-called Culture institution signifies only too often an arrangement by which the cultured, moving in closed ranks, force to one side all those solitary and contrary ones whose striving is directed to higher things. Also among the learned there is so far lacking, as a rule, all sense for the genius that is coming into being, and every feeling for the work of the contemporary and struggling soul. Therefore, in spite of the irresistible and restless advance in all technical and specialized fields, the conditions for the originating of the great are so little improved that the opposition to the highly gifted has rather increased than diminished.

“ From the government the superior individuals can not expect much. It helps them rarely when it takes them into its service, very certainly it will help them only when it gives them full independence. Only true Culture can prevent their early becoming weary or exhausted, and protect them from the exasperating battle with Culture-philistinism.”

Those words made my blood tingle, they made me tremble. Alone, miserable, helpless—here was a voice at last, a friend! I dropped the

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book and I went to the library, and I was back with "Also sprach Zarathustra" in an hour.

I have been reading it for two days—reading it in a state of excitement, forgetting everything. Here is a man!—Here is a man! The first night that I read it I kicked my heels together and laughed aloud in glee, like a child. *Oh*, it was so fine! And to find things like this already written, and in the world! Great heavens, it was like finding a gold mine underneath my feet; and I have forgotten all my troubles again, forgotten everything! I have found a man who understands me, a man to be my friend!

I do not know what the name Friedrich Nietzsche conveys to the average cultured American. I can only judge by my own case—I have kept pace with our literary movements and I have read the standard journals and reviews; but I have never come upon even a reference to Friedrich Nietzsche, except as a byword and a jest.

I had rather live my own life than any other man's life. My own vision is my home. But

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every great man's inspiration is a challenge, and until you have mastered it you can not go on.

I speak not of poets, nor of philosophers, but of religious teachers, of prophets; and I speak but my opinion—let every man form his own. I say that I have read all those that men honor, and that a greater prophet than this man has not come upon the earth in centuries. I think of Emerson and Carlyle as the religious teachers, the prophets, of this time; and beside this mighty spirit Emerson is a child and Carlyle a man without a faith or an idea. I call him the John Baptist of the new Dispensation, the first high priest of the Religion of Evolution; and I bid the truth-seeker read well his Bible, for in it lies the future of mankind for ages upon ages to come.

Half that I love in my soul's life I owe to the prophet of Nazareth. The other half I owe,—not to Nietzsche, but to the new Dispensation of which he is a priest. Nietzsche will stand alone; but he is nevertheless the child of his age—he sings what thousands feel.

It is a disadvantage to be the first man. If

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you are the first man you see but half-truths and you hate your enemies. When you seek truth, truly, all systems and all faiths of men—they are beautiful to you—born of sorrow, and hallowed with love; but they will not satisfy you, and you put them by. You do not let them influence you one way or the other; you can no more find truth while you are bound to them by hatred than while you are bound to them by love. There are dreary places in “Also sprach Zarathustra,” narrownesses and weaknesses too; they come whenever the writer is thinking of the evils of the hour, whenever he is gazing, not on the vision of his soul, but on the half-truths of the men about him.

When I speak of Christ let no man think of Christianity. I speak of a prince of the soul, the boldest, the freest, the noblest of men that I know. With the thousand systems that mankind has made in his memory, I have simply nothing in any way to do.

To me all morality is one. Morality is hunger and thirst after righteousness. Morality is a quality of will. The differences that there are be-

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tween Christ and Nietzsche are differences of the intellect—where no man is final.

The doctrine of each is a doctrine of sacrifice; with one it is a sacrifice of love, with the other it is a sacrifice of labor. For myself, I care not for the half-truths of any man. I said to my soul, "Shall I cast out love for labor?" And my soul replied, "For what wilt thou labor but love?"

Moral sublimity lies in the escape from self. The doctrine of Christ is a negation of life, that of Nietzsche an affirmation; it seems to me much easier to attain to sublimity with the former.

It is easier to die for righteousness than to live for it. If you are to die, you have but to fix your eyes upon your vision, and see that you do not take them away. But the man who will *live* for righteousness—he must plant and reap, must gather fire-wood and establish a police-force; and to do these things nobly is not easy; to do them sublimely seems hardly possible at all.

Twenty centuries ago the Jewish world was a little plain, and God a loving Father. He held you in his arms, he spoke to you in every dream, in every fantasy, in every accident. Life was

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very short—but a little trial—you had only to be patient, and nothing mattered. Society did not exist—only your neighbor existed. Knowledge did not exist, nor was it needed—the world was to end—perhaps to-night—and what difference made all the rest? You took no heed for the morrow—for would not your Father send you bread? You resisted not evil—for if you died, was not that all that you could ask?

It was with such a sweet and simple faith as this that the victory of Jesus Christ was won. These were his ideas, and as the soul was all-consuming with him, he lived by them and died by them, and stands as the symbol of faith.

And now twenty centuries have gone by. And a new teacher has come to whom also the soul is all-consuming. What ideas has *he*? And what task does he face?

I speak not to children. I speak to men seeking truth.

In twenty centuries we have learned that God is not a Father who answers prayers and works miracles and holds out his arms at the goal. We have come shuddering to the awful mystery of



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being; strange and terrible words have been spoken—words never to be forgotten—"phenomenon," and "thing-in-itself"; not knowing what these words mean, you are ignorant and recreant to the truth; *knowing* what they mean, you tug no more at the veil. Also we have learned that time and change are our portion, "the plastic dance of circumstance"; we talk no more of immortality. We have turned our hopes to the new birth of time, to the new goal of our labor, the new parent of our love, that we name Society.

And likewise Evolution has come, which is the whole of knowledge. And we have learned of starry systems, of the building of worlds, of the pageant of history and the march of mind. Out of all these things has come a new duty, which is not peace, but battle—which is not patience, but will—which is not death, but life.

There is no room in the world of Evolution for the doctrine of non-resistance to evil. Non-resistance to evil is the negation of life, and the negation of life is the negation of faith. How shall you resist not evil when life is action and not passion? When not a morsel of food can you

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touch except by the right that you are more fitted to survive than that morsel? How when you know that you rose from the beast by resistance? And that you stay above the beast by resistance? Will you give up the farm land to be jungle again? Or will you teach the beasts your non-resistance? And the trees of the forest to crowd no more your land!

It is no longer possible to build a heaven and reject the earth. Such as life is you have to take it.

And you have to live it. The huge machinery of Society is on your hands, with all its infinite complications, its infinite possibilities of beauty and joy. Your life is, as ever, a sacrifice; all life is, as ever, a sacrifice; but it is a sacrifice to man—a sacrifice to the best. Once your task was self-abnegation, and that was easy; now it is self-assertion, and that is hard. Knowing what you are, you will dare to live, not for your own sake, but that strength and beauty may be in the world. Knowing what you might be, you choose infinite toil for your portion, and in the humility of toil you find your holiest peace. Your enemy you resist with all your soul, not for hatred of your

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enemy, but for love of the right. If he were not evil he could not be your enemy; and being evil, he has no right to be. Your conscience to you is no longer a shame, but a joy; you think no more of infinite sin, but of infinite virtue.—And for the rest, you do not attain perfection, and you are not worshiped as a god; you are much troubled by trivialities, and the battle tries your soul. But you make no truce with lies, and you never lay down your sword; you keep your eyes upon a far goal, and you leave the world better than you found it. When you come to die you have no fear, but a song; for you are master of yourself, and you have learned to know that which you are.

—And there is only to add—that whether you believe these things or not, they are what you actually *do*. It seems to me not desirable that one's belief should be less than one's practise.

January 6th.

Has any one, at this end of the nineteenth century, a clear idea of what the poets of the ages called *Inspiration*? If no one have, I will describe it. With the least remainder of superstition in

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him a man would scarcely be able to put aside the idea that he was merely the Incarnation, the mouthpiece, the medium of overwhelming powers. The idea of Revelation in the mind describes exactly the state of affairs—that suddenly, with unspeakable certainty and fineness, something became visible and audible, something that shakes and pervades one to the depths. One hears—he does not seek; he takes—he does not ask who gives; like lightning gleams out a thought, of necessity, formed without hesitation—I have never had a choice. An ecstasy, whose colossal strain breaks in the middle with a stream of tears, in the course of which the step becomes, involuntary, now raging, now slow; a state in which one is completely beside himself, with the distinctest consciousness of countless shudderings and quiverings, even to the toes of his feet; a depth of joy in which all that is painful and somber serves, not as a contrast, but as conditioned, as demanded, as a necessary color in such an overflow of light; an instinct of rhythmic relations which overleaps vast spaces of forms; all happening in the highest degree involuntarily, but as if in a storm of sensations of freedom, of infinity, of power, of divinity.—This is my experience of In-

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spiration; I doubt not but that one must needs go back thousands of years to find one who might say, "It is also mine."

Do you think that *I* wrote that—I, Arthur Stirling? No, I did not write that. The man who wrote that is known to you as an atheist.

January 7th.

When Zarathustra came into the next city, which lay beside the forest, he found in that place much people gathered together in the market; for they had been called that they should see a rope-dancer. And Zarathustra spoke thus unto the people:

"*I teach ye the Over-man.* The man is something who shall be overcome. What have ye done to overcome him?

"All being before this made something beyond itself: and you will be the ebb of this great flood, and rather go back to the beast than overcome the man?

"What is the ape to the man? A mockery or a painful shame. And even so shall man be to the Over-man: a mockery or a painful shame.

"Man is a cord, tied between Beast and Over-man—a cord above an abyss.

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“ A perilous arriving, a perilous traveling, a perilous looking backward, a perilous trembling and standing still.

“ What is great in man is that he is a bridge, and no goal; what can be loved in man is that he is a going-over and a going-under.

“ I love them that know not how to live, be it even as those going under, for such are those going across.

“ I love them that are great in scorn, because these are they that are great in reverence, and *arrows of longing toward the other shore!*”

And here ended the first speech of Zarathustra.

“ The air thin and clear, the danger nigh, and the spirit filled with a joyful mischief; these things go well together.

“ I will have gnomes about me, for I am merry. . . .

“ I feel no more with you; these clouds which I see under me, these clouds black and heavy over which I laugh—just these are your storm-clouds.

“ You gaze upward if you long for exaltation. I gaze downward because I am exalted.



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“ Who among you can both laugh and be exalted?

“ Who climbs upon the highest mountains, he laughs at all sorrow-play and sorrow-reality.

“ Bold, untroubled, mocking, full of power—so will wisdom have us; she is a woman and loves always but the warrior.

“ You say to me: ‘ Life is hard to bear.’ But for what had you your pride in the morning, and in the evening your submission? . . .

“ I would believe only in a god who knew how to dance.

“ And when I saw my devil, I found him earnest, profound, deep, solemn; he was the Spirit of Heaviness—through him fail all things.

“ Not by anger, but by laughing, one kills. Up, let us kill the Spirit of Heaviness! . . .

“ Free dost thou call thyself? Thy ruling thoughts will I hear, and not that thou hast escaped a yoke.

“ Art thou such a one that *can* escape a yoke?

“ Free from what? What is that to Zarathustra! Clear shall your eye tell me: free *to* what?

“ Canst thou give to thyself thy good and

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thine evil, and hang thy will above thee as thy law? Canst thou be thine own judge, and avenger of thy law?

“ Fearful it is to be alone with the judge and the avenger of thy law. So is a stone flung out into empty space and into the icy breath of isolation.—

“ Dost thou know truly, my brother, the word scorn? And the pain of thy righteousness, to be just that which thou dost scorn? . . .

“ As I lay in sleep a sheep ate up the ivy crown of my head—ate and then said: ‘Zarathustra is no more a scholar.’

“ Said it and went strutting away, and proud. A child told it to me. . . .

“ This is the truth. I am gone out of the house of the scholars, and have slammed to the door behind me. . . .

“ I am too hot, and burning with my own thoughts; oft will it take away my breath. I must into the open and out of all dusty rooms.

“ But they sit cool in cool shadows; they wish in all things to be but spectators, and guard themselves lest they sit where the sun burns the steps.

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“ Like those who stand upon the street and stare at the people who go by; so they wait also and stare at the thoughts that others have thought.

“ If one touches them with the hands, they make dust around them like meal-sacks, and involuntarily; *but who could guess that their dust comes from corn and the golden rapture of the summer fields?*

“ Too far away into the future I flew; a horror overcame me. And as I looked around me, there was Time my only companion.

“ Then I flew backward, homeward—and ever faster: so I came to you, men of the present, and to the Land of Culture.

“ For the first time I brought an eye for you, and good wishes; truly, with longing in my heart I came.

“ And what happened to me? Frightened as I was—I had to laugh. Never had my eyes seen anything so color-besprinkled!

“ I laughed and laughed while my foot still trembled, and my heart too: ‘ Here is the home of all paint-pots!’ said I.

“ Painted over with fifty spots in face and

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limbs; so sat ye there, to my amazement, ye men of the present! . . .

“Written all over with the signs of the past, and also these signs painted over with new signs; so you have hidden yourself well from all sign-readers! . . .

“All Times and Principles look piebald out of your coverings; all Customs and Faiths speak piebald out of your features. . . .

“How *could* ye believe, ye color-besprinkled!—who are pictures of everything that ever was believed! . . .

“Ah, whither shall I go now with my longing?”

“Who are pictures of everything that ever was believed! Who are pictures of everything that ever was believed!” I read that and I slapped my knees and I lay back and laughed like a very Falstaff. “Pictures of everything that ever was believed!” Ho, ho, ho!

—That is some of Nietzsche!

January 8th.

To-day it snowed hard, and it occurred to me that I might add to my money. I bought a

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second-hand shovel and went out to shovel snow. It is not so bad, I said, you are out of doors, and also you can think of Nietzsche.

I made a dollar and a half, but I fear I did not think very much. My hands were cold, for one thing, and my shoes thin, for another.

There is nothing that brings me down like physical toil. It is madness to believe that you can do anything else—you drudge and drudge, and your mind is an absolute blank while you do it. It is a thing that sets me wild with nervousness and impatience. I hate it! I hate it!

And I find myself crying out and protesting against it; and then I see other men not minding it, and I hear the words of my dear clergyman friend: "The labor which all of us have to share." So I say to myself: Perhaps I am really an idler then! A poor unhappy fool that can not face life's sternness, that is crying out to escape his duty!

That I could say such a thing—O God, what sign is that of how far I have fallen! Of how much I have yielded!—

A vapor, heavy, hueless, formless, cold!

Leave it to time! Leave it to time!

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—I hear that, and I hear around me the laughter of mocking demons. It startles my soul—but no longer to rage as it used to. I sit and stare at it with a great, heavy numbness possessing me.

January 12th.

I am still reading Nietzsche. I think I shall read all that he has written. I am always kept aware of the limitations, but he is a tremendous man. Can you guess how this took hold of me?—

### THE GRAVE-SONG

“There lies the island of graves, the silent; there are also the graves of my youth. Thither will I carry an evergreen wreath of life.”

Thus resolving in my heart, I went over the sea.—

Oh ye visions and apparitions of my youth!  
Oh all ye glances of love, ye godlike moments!  
How swiftly you died in me! I remember you  
to-day as my dead.

From you, my dearest dead, there comes to me a sweet odor, heart-melting, tear-melting. Truly it shakes and melts the heart of the lonely seaman.



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Still am I the richest and the most to be envied—I, the most lonely. For I *had* you, and you have me still; say, to whom fell, as to me, such rose-apples from the trees? . . .

*Me* to kill, they strangled you, you song-birds of my hopes. Yea, at you, the dearest, shot wickedness its arrows—to strike my heart! . . .

This word will I speak to my enemies: “What is all murder of man beside that which ye did to me?”

Thus, in the good hour, spake my purity: “Godlike shall all being be to me.”

Then ye fell upon me with your foul spirits; ah, whither now hath the good hour fled?

“All days shall be holy to me”—so spake once the wisdom of my youth; truly the speech of a happy wisdom.

But then you enemies stole away my nights and sold them to sleepless torment; ah, whither now hath the happy wisdom fled? . . .

As a blind man once I went a blissful way; then you threw rubbish in the blind man’s way; and now he is weary of the old blind ascendings. . . .

And once would I dance as never had I danced before; above all the heavens away would

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I dance. And then you lured away my dearest singer! . . .

Only in the dance can I speak metaphors of the highest things:—and now my highest metaphor remained unspoken in my limbs!

Unspoken and undelivered remained my highest hope! And there died all the visions and solaces of my youth! *Metzger seems partly insane. He committed suicide.*

That thing brought the tears down my cheeks. It is what my soul has cried all day and all night—that I see all my joy and all my beauty going!

It is the fearful, the agonizing *waiting* that does it. I know it—I put it down—there is nothing kills the soul in a man so much as that. When you wait your life is outside of yourself; you hope,—you are at the mercy of others—at the mercy of indifference and accident and God knows what.

But again I cry, “What can I do? If there is anything I have not done—tell me! Tell me!”

Here I sit, and I have but seven dollars left to my name, including what I made by the shoveling. And I sit and watch the day creep on me

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like a wild beast on its prey—the day when I must go back into the world and toil again! Oh, it will kill me—it will kill me!

I sit and wait and hang upon the faint chance of one publisher more. It is my only chance,—and such a chance! I find myself calculating, wondering; yes, famous books have been rejected often, and still found their mark. Can I still believe that this book will shake men?

Ah, God, in my soul I do not believe it, because I have lost my inspiration! I have let go of that fire that was to drive like a wind-storm over the world.

Yes, I ask myself if such things can be! I ask myself if they were real, all those fervors and all that boldness of mine! If it was natural, that way that I lived!

—Oh, and then I look back, and my heart grows sick within me.

So I spend my time, and when I turn and try to lose myself in Nietzsche, his mercilessness flings me into new despair.

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January 18th.

I have the terrible gift of insensibility; and I think my insensibility torments me more than anything else in the world.

I have no life, no power, no feeling, naturally—it is all my will, it is all effort. And now that I am not striving, I sink back into a state of numbness, of dull, insensible despair. I no longer feel anything, I no longer care about anything. I pass my time in helpless impotence—and day by day I watch a thing creeping upon me as in a nightmare. I must go out into the world again and slave for my bread!

—Oh, *then* I will feel something, I think!

Another week and more is gone, and I have but a little over four dollars.

January 20th.

I have stopped reading Nietzsche. I could not stand any more of it. It does not satisfy me.

It is not merely that I am so weak now, and that his mocking goads me. I would have been through with him in any case. He is so narrow—so one-sided.

It is reaction from the present, of course, that accounts for it. Too much gazing upon the

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world, that has led him to believe that love of man necessarily implies compromise.

There are two words that are absent from his writings—they are love and humanity; and so it never satisfies you, you are always discontented, you have always to correct and supply.

January 22d.

Oh why do those publishers take so long! I wait and yearn; I grow sick with waiting and yearning.

I never allowed any weakness in my soul before; I never made any terms with it. I blamed everything upon myself. And now that my whole life is weakness and misery, I writhe and struggle—I turn back always on myself, suspecting myself, blaming myself. I can not lay it to the world, I can not get into the habit—it is such a miserable habit! How many millions there are of them—poor, querulous wretches, blaming their fate, crying out against the world's injustice and neglect—crying out against the need of working, wishing for this and that—discontented, impotent, miserable! Oh my God—and I am one of such!

I can not bear the sound of my own voice

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when I complain! I hear the world answering me—and I take the part of the world! “Why don’t you be a man and go out and earn your way? Why don’t you face your fate? You prate about your message—what business has a man with a message that is too much for him? What business have you with weakness—what *excuse* have you for weakness?”

And so I came to see it. The world is right and I am all wrong! And the truth of it burns me like an acid in my brain.

January 24th.

And all the time my whole being is still restless with the storms that raged in it last spring! I have all those memories, all that poignancy. I can not realize it—any of what I was and had—but I know it as a *fact*, a memory, and I crouch and tremble, I grow sick with it.

Why don’t they write to me? My money is going!

January 26th.

The reason that I shudder so at the prospect of having to face the world again, is that I have no hope. *I have no hope!* Once I could go out into that hellish market. I could be any man’s



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slave, do any drudgery—because I saw a light ahead—I saw deliverance—I had a purpose!

And now what purpose have I—what hope have I? I tell you I am a man in a trap! I can do nothing! I can do no more than if I were walled in with iron!

I say that my business in this world is to be a poet! I say that there is only one thing I can do—only one way that I can get free—and that is by doing my work, by writing books. And I have done all that I can do, I have earned my freedom—and no one will give it to me! Oh, I shall die if I am penned here much longer!

I eat out my heart, I burn up my very entrails in my frenzies. Set me free! *Set me free!*

I thought to-day if I only had a little money—if I could only publish that book myself! I can not believe that men would not love it—I can not—no, you may crush me all you please, but I can not! And I would take it and shout it from the housetops—I would peddle it on the streets—I would *make* the world hear me!

—And then I sink back, and I hear the world say, “You poor fool!”

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January 28th.

I have only a dollar and a half left! I have sat, shuddering and waiting, all that I dare; the end is come now, I must look for work to-morrow. It is like a death-sentence to me. I could do nothing to-night.

January 29th.

Providence came to help me to-night for once! It snowed to-day and I have been hard at work again.

January 30th.

Some more snow. My hands were nearly frost-bitten, but I keep at it; for at least it is out in the air, and it gives me a little longer respite.

In the afternoon I made up my mind to go and see the publishers and ask them if they could not read the story at once—it has been a month. I saw their literary manager; he said he was going to read it himself.

January 31st.

More snow again to-day. And I have made over five dollars. But I have come out of it more dead than alive—dulled, dispirited, utterly worn out.

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If I could only be an animal for a time. But each day of the drudgery only makes me wilder with nervousness.

February 1st.

They regret, of course, and hold the MS. at my disposal. I went up to get it this afternoon, and half by accident I met the man I had seen before. I had a talk with him. He was a very curious personage.

He seemed to have been interested in *The Captive*. "I'll tell you," he said, "you know there's really some extraordinary work in that poem. I believe that you have it in you to make some literature before you get through, Mr. Stirling."

"Do you?" I said.

"Yes," he replied, "I feel pretty sure of it. You ask me to tell you about it—so you mustn't mind if I speak frankly. And of course it's very crude. You haven't found your voice yet, you're seeking for mastery, and your work is obviously young. Anybody can see in a few lines that it's young—it's one of those things like *Goetz von Berlichingen*, or *Die Räuber*—you tear a passion to tatters, you want to rip the universe up the

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back. But of course that wears off by and by; it isn't well to take life too seriously, you know, and I don't think it'll be long before you come to feel that *The Captive* isn't natural or possible—or desirable either."

The publisher was smoking a cigar. He puffed for a moment and then he asked, "What are you doing now?"

"Nothing just at present," said I.

"I should have supposed you'd be writing another poem," he replied,—“though of course as a matter of fact the wisest thing you can do is to wait and learn. Your next book will be entirely different, you can be quite sure—you won't be so anxious to get hold of all the world and make it go your way.”

I smiled feebly. "Possibly not," I said.

"I'll tell you a story," said the publisher—"speaking about youthful aspirations! I was talking to Mr. X—— last night, the author of ——.\* You wouldn't think X—— was the sort of man to be reforming the world, would you? But he told me about his earliest work, that he said he had tucked away in a drawer, and it turned

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\* The manuscript names an extremely popular historical novel.

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out he was like all other authors. This was a socialist story, it seems, and the hero delivered fiery speeches six pages long. And X—— said that he had written it and taken it to a publisher, expecting to upset the world a week after it appeared, but that he never could get anybody to publish it, and gave it up finally and went into journalism. The funny part of it was that he had sent it here, and when he told me about it, I remembered looking it over and writing him just about what I'm telling you."

The publisher smoked for a moment or two. "You see, Mr. Stirling," he said at last, "he had to wait ten years before he 'arrived.' So you must not be discouraged. Have you read his book?"

"No, I have not."

"It is a very pretty piece of work—it's been many months since it came out, but they say it's still selling in the thousands. Don't get discouraged, Mr. Stirling, keep at it, because you have real talent, I assure you."

I rose to go, and he shook my hand. "Take my advice," he said, "and write something more practicable than a tragedy. But of course don't forget in any case that we shall always

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be very happy to read anything of yours at any time."

—I walked down the street meditating. I will get over it again, of course; but to-night I sat in the dark and the cold, shivering. And I asked myself if it must not be so after all. "*Is it true, the thing that I did; is it natural?*" I said. "Or must it not be exaggerated and crude, as they all tell me! And uninteresting!—What is the use of it? I tormented myself that way and tore myself to pieces, but it does not stir any one else."

Ah, of course it's all dead in me—and I'm prepared to believe anything they tell me! It's overwrought, it's young, it's pitched in too high a key, it's strained and unnatural, it takes life too seriously! Certainly at any rate they are right that I shall never, never do the same thing again.

But unfortunately I don't feel like writing anything else. I don't know anything about historical novels.

—I would have read some of the poem again to-night, but I'm too discouraged. I am tired of it. I know it by heart, and it doesn't take hold of me.



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I have been too long among men, I groan.  
I see their point of view too well!

Why, there are things in that book that when  
I read them now make me shudder. I have hard-  
ly the courage to offer it to any one else to read.  
I don't know any one to take it to, besides.

O God, I'm so unhappy!

February 3d.

To-day an idea occurred to me, one that  
should have occurred before. Once upon a time  
I was introduced to the editor of the ——. Per-  
haps he will not remember it, I said. But any-  
how, why not try? I will take him *The Captive*  
—perhaps he can use it in the magazine—who  
knows?

I knew nothing better to do, so I went there.  
He was very polite—he did remember my face.  
He was fearfully busy, it seemed. He did not  
think there was much likelihood of a magazine's  
publishing a blank-verse tragedy; but I told him  
how I had worked, and he said he'd read it.

And so there's one chance more!

My poor, foolish heart is always ready to  
tremble with new hope. But faith in that book  
was so *ground* into it!

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—I asked him to read it at once, I explained that I was in great haste. I think he understood what I meant. My clothes show it.

I have been hoarding my money—counting every cent. I dread the world so! Now that I am so broken, so laden with misery, it sounds about me as one jeer of mockery. But I shall have to be hunting a place soon—you never can tell how long it may take you, and the chances are so terrible.

I will not do anything until I hear from this one man, however. He promised to let me know in a week.

I did not see him at the publisher's—he has another office besides. He had huge piles of papers and books about him; he is an important man, I guess; can it be that he will be the one to save me?

I think: “Oh if he knew, he would!” I find myself thinking that of all the world—if I could only make them understand! Poor, impotent wretch, if I could only find the *word!*

—Or is it simply my blind egotism that makes me think that?

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February 6th.

I do not think that what I write can be of much interest. It must be monotonous—all this despair, this endless crying out, this endless repetition of the same words, the same thought.

Yet that is all that my life is! That is just what I do every day—whenever I am not reading a book to forget myself.

It is all so simple, my situation! That is the most terrible thing about it, it is the same thing always and forever.

I have lived so much agony through this thing—it would not startle me if I saw that my hair had turned white. I know I feel like an old man. I am settled down into mournfulness, into despair; I can do nothing but gaze back—I have lived my life—I have spent my force—I am tired and sick.

I! I! I!—do you get tired of hearing it? It was not always like that; once you read a little about a book.

February 8th.

This is the fifth day. I am counting the days, I have been counting the very hours. He said

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he would be a week. And I—only think of it—I have but two dollars and sixty cents left!

Hurry up! Hurry up!

—And then I say with considerable scorn in my voice: “Haven’t you learned enough about that manuscript yet? And about publishers yet?”

February 10th.

Just imagine! I went to see him to-day, and he stared at me. “Why, sure enough, Mr. Stirling!—It had slipped my mind entirely!”

I have learned to bear things. I asked him calmly to let me know as soon as possible. He said: “I am honestly so rushed that I do not know where to turn. But I will do the best I possibly can.”

I said—poor, pitiful cringing, is it not terrible?—that I’d be up his way again in three days, and did he think he could have it read by then. He said he was not sure, but that he’d try.

And so I went away. Now I have two dollars and twenty-three cents. I have to pay my rent to-morrow, and that will leave me a dollar and a half. I can make that do me seven or eight days—I have one or two things at home. I’ll wait

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the three days—and then I'll have to set out in earnest to find something to do.

Oh, the horror of not knowing if you can pay your next week's room rent in this fearful city!

February 11th.

I sat and looked at myself to-day. I said: "When a soul is crushed like this, can it ever get up again? Can it ever be the same, no matter what happens? Don't you see the fact, that you've been tamed and broken—that you've *given in!* And how will you ever rise from the shame of it, how will you ever forget it? All this skulking and trembling—how will you ever dare look yourself in the face again! Will not it mock your every effort? Why, you poor wretch, *you've got a broken back!*"

February 12th.

And to-morrow again I must go there, trembling and nervous, hanging on a word!

There is not much sense in it, but I have learned to hate all men who have ease and power.

February 13th.

I knew it! I could have told it beforehand. "I am awfully sorry, Mr. Stirling, but it is no

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use talking, I simply can not! I will write you just as soon as ever I get it read."

And so I came out. I had a dollar and twenty cents. My rent would be due in four days again. So even if I got some work at once I should have to pawn something.

—Thus I began my search for a situation. I could not choose—I was willing to take anything.

I fear I look like a tramp; but I have several letters from places where I have worked. Still, I could not find anything. I have tramped all day until I could hardly move. I bought a paper, but everything advertised was gone by that time.

If it would only snow again, so that I could shovel some more!

February 14th.

Again I have been pacing the streets the whole endless day, beaten back and rebuffed at every turn. I have been drilled for this, this is the climax! First take every gleam of heart out of me, and then set me to pacing the streets in the cold, to be stared at and insulted by every kind of a man!

And still nothing to do.



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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February 15th.

I take my lunch with me—I have cut myself down to twenty cents a day for food. I walk and walk, and I am so hungry I can not do on less than that. I have but sixty cents left to-night. I failed again to-day.

February 16th.

It is not as desperate as it sounds, because I have a few books and things that I can sell—I do not believe that I will actually starve—I have always done my work well, and have gotten references. But O God, the shame of it—the endless, heaped-up bitterness!

I have sunk into a beast of burden. I trudge on with my mind torpid—I take whatever comes to me, and go on mechanically. Oh it cows me, it wears me down! I have learned to bear anything—*anything*! A man might kick me and I would not mind.

I think I went to fifty places yesterday. Nothing to do—nothing. To-day is Sunday, but I tried even to-day. I came home to get some dinner.—I might have been a porter in a hotel, and carried trunks—that was my one chance. But I have not the physical power for that.

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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—And then after all—toward evening—when I was so tired I was almost wild—I had an offer at last! And guess what it was—of all the things that I had made up my mind I could not bear—to be a waiter!

It is, I believe, what a man should call a rare opportunity. It is a fairly good restaurant just off Broadway; and I get ten dollars and tips. Poor me! My heart bounded for a moment, and then I asked myself, And what do you want with money any more? I took the place, and I am to begin the day after to-morrow. I am so tired I can hardly move.

February 17th.

Was it not irony? I have watched day by day for snow; and now that I have taken the other place—behold, to-day it snows a foot!

—I went to see the editor in the afternoon. I was desperate at the thought of to-morrow. I said I would tell him!—But when I got there I only had the courage to inquire about the poem. He had not read it. I feared he seemed annoyed.

I shall not go there again for a week. I can not make him hurry.

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February 18th.

To-day I had to begin by apologizing to my landlady, and begging her to let me pay her a week later. I had to go into an elaborate explanation—she wanted to know why I had not been working all these months, and so on. She has a red face, and drinks, I think.

Then I had to take a load of my best books—my poor, few precious books that I have loved—and sell them at a second-hand bookstore. When I had sold them I had to hire a waiter's suit for a week, until I had money to buy it. And then with that awful thing on I went down to the restaurant.

Can you imagine how a pure woman would feel if she had to go into a brothel to live? That was just how I felt—just how! Oh my God, the indignity of it! Is there *anything* that I could do more humiliating?

—But I have lost the power of getting angry. Only my heart is one great sob.

February 20th.

Oh, that hellish place! What is there in this whole city more brutal than that restaurant?

Day and night, day and night, to see but one

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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thing—to see flashy, overdressed, fat and vulgar men and women gorging themselves! Oh, this will teach me to feel—this at least! I go about with my whole being one curse of rage—I could throttle them! And to bow and smirk and lackey them—all day! All day! Oh, what shall I do—how shall I bear it?

They offer me tips. At first I thought I should refuse; but no, I dare not do that, even if I wanted to. And since I have stooped to do it, I will take all I can get. To get money is my one passion now. Oh my God, how can I bear it!

February 21st.

I said to-day, I must fight this thing—I must, or it will kill me; I can not let myself go to wreck in this fashion—*I've got to fight!*

And so I got my note-book; and I fell to work to drive myself as of old. The effort that it cost me made me ill, but I did it. I shall keep on doing it—I am like a man faced by a fiend—I *must* keep on—I must!

But then, why do you want to have new languages? Do you not know enough now to keep you in reading matter for all the time you are ever likely to have?

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February 24th.

Oh, one can get used to even a flashy restaurant! It is your fate—you take it. This is how I pass all my time there. I struggle to resist the deadening of it, and the horror of it; while I am going about the loathsome grind I try to think—try to have some idea in my head. And something comes to me—something beautiful, perhaps; and then in a few moments, in the clatter and confusion, I lose it; and after that I go about haunted, restless, feeling that I have lost something, that I ought to be doing something. What the thing is, I do not even know—but so it drives me and drives me!

I spend literally hours that way.

February 25th.

When are you going to read that poem—*when?* The week was gone yesterday—but I will not trouble you, even now! I wait, I wait!

February 27th.

There is another torment about this fearful place that I am in, one that you could not imagine. I had thought that it would be a pleasure, but it tears my soul. They have music in the

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evening; and fancy a person in my state listening to a violin!

Chiefly, of course, they play trash; but sometimes there comes something beautiful, perhaps only a phrase. But it takes hold of my soul, it makes my eyes grow dim, it makes me shudder. It is all my pent-up agony, it is all my sleeping passion—why, it overwhelms me! And I am helpless—I can not get away from it!

Remember that I have not heard any music for a year. It is like the voice of a dead love to me. I thought to-night that I could not bear it.

March 1st.

To-day I had a day off, and I went to see the editor. I have been waiting, day by day, for a letter; it has been a month since I left it with him, and I found that he had not read it yet!

“Mr. Stirling,” he said, “it is not my fault, it has simply been impossible. Now I will tell you what to do. I am going out of the city Sunday week, and I shall have a little leisure then. I do not see how I can get to it before that, so you take it and see if you can find some one else to read it meanwhile. If you will bring it to me



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Saturday, a week from to-day, I will promise you faithfully to read it on Sunday."

So I took the manuscript. I tried four publishing houses, but I could not find one that would read it in a week. I had to take the manuscript home.

March 3d.

To-morrow ends my second week at the restaurant. It took me five days to find that place, but I am going to give it up to-morrow. I could not bear it, if it were to save my life. I can not bear the noise and the grease and the dirt, and the endless, endless vulgarity; but above all I can not bear the music.

I can bear almost any degradation, I have found; but not when I have to listen to music!

Besides, I can afford to give it up. I have made a fortune. I shall have over thirty dollars when I leave!

I have always been paid, I find, in proportion to the indignities I bore—in proportion to the amount I humiliated myself before the rich and the vulgar. These vile, bejeweled, befeathered women, these loathsome, swinish men—*these* are the people who have money to spend. They

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go through the world scattering their largess with royal hand; and you can get down and gather it up out of the mud beneath their feet.

I come home at night worn out and weak, sometimes almost in a stupor; but I am never too ill to brood over that hideous state of affairs. I gaze at it and I wring my hands, and I cry: Oh my Father in heaven, will it always be like this?

Think of it—this money that these people squander—do you know what it is? It is the toil of society! That is what it is,—it is *my* toil—it is the toil of the millions that swarm in the tenements where I live—it is the toil of the laborers, the beasts of burden of society, in the cities and in the country.

Think about it, I cry, think about it!—Can I not find any word, is there nothing I can do or say now or at any time, to make men see it? Why, you take it for granted—I have taken it for granted all my days—that money should belong to the brutal rich to squander in whatever inanity may please them! But it never dawns upon you that this money is *the toil of the human race!* Money is the representation of all that human toil creates—of all *value*; it is houses that laborers build,

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it is grain that farmers raise, it is books that poets write! And see what becomes of it—see! *see!* Or are you blind or mad, that you *will* not see? Have you no more faith in man, no more care about the soul?

You think that I have been made sick by my work in that one haunt of vice. But it is not only that, it is not only that fever district where all the diseases of a city gather. I have been all *over* the city, and it is everywhere the same. Go to the opera-house any night and you may see blasphemous vanity enough to feed the starving of this city for a year. Walk up Fifth Avenue and see them driving; or go to Newport and see them there. Why, I read in the papers once of a woman who gave a ball—and the little fact has stuck in my mind ever since that she wore a dress trimmed with lace that cost a thousand dollars a meter! I do not speak of the infinite vulgarity of the thing—it is the monstrous *crime* of it that cries to me. These people—why, they have society by the *throat!*

I bury my face in my pillow and sob; but then I look up and pray for faith. I say we are

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only at the beginning of civilization, we can see but the first gleams of a social conscience; but it will come—it must come! Am I to believe that mankind will always submit to toil and pant to make lace at a thousand dollars a meter to cover the pride-swollen carcase of a society dame?

How is it to be managed? I do not know. I am not a political economist—I am a seeker after righteousness. But as a poet, and as a clear-eyed soul, I stand upon the heights and I cry out for it, I demand it. I demand that society shall come to its own, I demand that there shall be intelligence in the world! I demand that the toil of the millions shall not be for the pride of the few! I demand that it shall not be to buy diamonds and dresses and banquets, horses and carriages, palaces and yachts! I demand that it shall be for the making of knowledge and power, of beauty and light and love!

Oh, thou black jungle of a world!—What know you of knowledge and power, of beauty and light and love? What do you dream of these things? The end of man as you know it is to fight

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and struggle like a maniac, and grab for his own all that he can lay his claws upon. And what is your social ideal—but to lavish, each man upon himself, all that he can lavish before he dies? And whom do you honor save him who succeeds in that? And whom do you scorn save him who fails?

Oh thou black jungle of a world!—I cry it once again—

Where savage beasts through forest midnight roam,  
Seeking in sorrow for each other's joy!

I sit alone and think of these things, until my breath comes hard with rage. I say: "It is these that I serve—it is these who own the fruits of my toil—it is these for whom I am starved and crushed—it is these by whom my God-given power is trampled into annihilation!"

March 4th.

I gave the place up this morning. I have thirty-one dollars. I think such a sum of money never made me less happy.

I have nothing to do but drag myself back to my room and wait there until the eighth, to take back my manuscript. It will be five weeks that he has kept me—I suppose that is not his fault.

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And then I say: "Fool, to torment yourself with such hopes! Don't you *know* that he will say what all the rest have said? He is a clever man, and he knows everything; but what use is he going to have for your poetry?"

I wandered about almost all of to-day, or sat stupid in my room. I have lost all my habits of effort—I have forgotten all that I ever knew, all my hopes, all my plans. I said: "I will study!" But then I added: "Why should I? Shall I not only make myself miserable, get myself full of emotion, and to no purpose but the carrying of dishes?"

It is terrible to me to have to acknowledge any change in my way of living—I never did that before. Compromises! Concessions! Surrenders!—words such as those set me mad. But what am I to do? What *can* I do? I writhe and twist, but there is no escape. I struggle upward, but I am only beaten back and back? How should I not stop striving?

Circumstances made no difference to a man. So I used to prate!



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No difference! Why, I was a giant in my soul, swift and terrible as the lion. I leaped upon my task, I seized upon everything that came my way. I passed whole classes of men at a bound, I saw, I felt—I bore the world in my soul. I would dare everything, learn everything, live everything—take it all into myself. And every day I was stronger, every day I was more!—

And now see me! You have penned me here, you have starved me, stunted me, crushed me—I sit shivering and staring at my own piteousness! Why, I can not even be angry any more—I am too shrunken, too impotent for that! And was it my fault? Have I not fought till I was ill?

—But never did I put forth a hope that it was not withered in the bud! My every enthusiasm you stamped into the ground; every advance that I made—why you smote me in the face! And all my ardor, my confidence, my trust—has it ever met with anything but jeers?

—Yes, and now you turn away—this revolts you! This is bare, painful egotism—this is whining—this is querulous misery. It offends you like the sight of raw flesh!

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—It is my raw soul. My poor little naked, pitiful, beaten soul!—groveling, and begging, too!

—But whose fault is it—merciful Heaven, whose fault is it? It is my nature to live in myself—to live from myself. And this that is unbearable egotism, why, it would have been exulting power! Joy in a vision! Mastery of a life and an art!

But here you shut me up! You crush me down! I try to escape—I cry out: “I am *not* an egotist—I am a worshiper! I want nothing in the world so much as to forget myself—my rights, my claims, my powers, my talents! I want to think of God! Only give me a chance—only give me a chance to do that, and I care not what you do with me! Here I stand with my poor little work, begging, pleading for some one to heed it! Thinking of it only, living for it only, insisting upon it day and night! But do you think that I do that of choice? My God, no—you are mad—I only want to go on! Give me but the chance to go on—and do you think that I would care whether any man admired my work?”

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—Why, I would not even know it—I would be out in the mountains alone!

“ But for what had you your pride in the morning, and in the evening your submission? ”

Can you guess how that jeer rings in my ears, how it goads me?

March 5th.

Sinking down! Sinking down! To see yourself one of the losing creatures, to know that there is no help for you in this world—that no one will heed you, no one will stretch out a hand! To see yourself with every weakness, to see yourself as everything that you hate—to be mad with rage against yourself, and still to be able to do nothing!

—Understand what I mean—poor fools, do not think it is for myself that I fear. If I wanted to fight a way for myself—I could do it yet—never fear. But ah, you will save the mother and not her child! What I weep for, what I die for, is my ART!

My vision, my life, my joy, my fire! These are the things that are dying! And when the soul is dead do you think that I shall care about

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the body? Do you think that I will stay in this world a shell, a mockery, a corpse? Stay either to putrefy with pleasure or to be embalmed in dulness? Nay, you do not know me!

—I said to myself to-night, “If I perish in this world it will be because I was too far ahead of my environment—that and that only. It will be because I was pure, single-hearted, consecrated, and because of such you neither know nor care.” Do I fear to say that? I am done with shame—I think that I am dying—let me speak the truth.

—And I have really said the word then—the word that can not be recalled—that my hope is dead, that I give up—that I can not live my life? Nay—I do not have to say the word, the word says itself.

March 6th.

To-day I shook myself together. I could not stand such wretchedness. I said, I will get a novel, and I will put myself into it—grimly—I will read in spite of everything.

And such a book as I lighted on by chance!  
—Once I had whole yawning vistas of books

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toward which I stretched out my arms; but somehow I had forgotten them all to-day. I could do no better than pick up a book by chance.—

I picked up *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and I found myself in the midst of the same misery that haunts me here. I read it, but it did not help me.

—It is strange what poverty has ground into my soul. I find myself reading such a book with but one feeling, one idea crying out in me. I discover that my whole being is reduced to the great elemental, primitive instinct of self-preservation. Love is dead in me, generosity, humanity, imagination is dead,—everything but one wild-beast passion; and I find myself panting as I read: “Get some money! Get some money! Hold on to it!”

—After a while I think suddenly: “And I am a poet!” That brings a moan from me and I sit shuddering.

March 7th.

X *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is one of the most unconvincing books I ever read. I neither believed in it nor cared about it in the slightest.

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I am shown a "pure woman," and by and by I learn, to my perplexity, that she has been seduced; after which she continues the "pure woman" again, and I am asked to agonize over her troubles! But all the time I keep saying, "This is not a woman that you are showing me at all—a woman with a soul; it is a puppet figure that you suppose 'seduced' for the sake of the story."

It is our absurd English ideas of "propriety" that make possible such things. If the author had had to show the seduction of "Tess" the weakness of the thing would have been plain in an instant. That he did not show it was his lack of conscience. There is no propriety in art but truth.

March 8th.

I took the manuscript to the editor again to-day. He told me to come in on Monday.

Deep in my soul I can have no more disappointments about it. I take it about from habit. I sat and looked it over last night, but one can not read emotional things in cold blood. I said, Is this true? Is it natural? Is there any *use* in it?

I was tempted to cut out one or two things; but I decided to let it stay as it was.



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March 10th.

I have been sitting to-night in my room, half-dazed, or pacing about the streets talking to myself in a frenzy. I can hardly believe that it is true, I can hardly realize it! I laugh with excitement, and then I cry.

I went to-day to get back my manuscript. And the editor said: "Mr. Stirling, it is a most extraordinary piece of work. It is a most interesting thing, I like it very much."

I stared at him gasping. Then I waited to hear him say—"But I regret"—But he didn't!

"I can't tell you anything definite about it," he said. "I want to submit it to the firm. I wouldn't undertake to accept any such unusual thing for the magazine without consulting them, and especially seeing if they will bring it out afterward——"

"You are thinking of using it in the magazine!" I cried.

"As I tell you, I can't say positively. I can only tell you what I think of it. I will have them read it at once——"

"I will take it to them to-day!" I put in.

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"No," he said, "you need not, for I am going there this afternoon, and I will take it, and ask them to read it immediately."

I can't remember what else he said. I was deaf, crazy! I rushed home, talking to myself incoherently. I remember sitting here in a chair and saying aloud, "Oh, it can't be! It is impossible! That it should be good enough to publish in a magazine like that! It is some mistake—it will all come to nothing. It's absurd!"

So I sat, and I thought what such a thing would mean to me—it would make my reputation in a day—I should be free—*free!* But I thought of it and it did not make me happy; I only sat staring at myself, shuddering. The endless mournfulness that is in my heart surged up in me like a tide, and suddenly I began to cry like a child.

"It has come to me too late," I exclaimed, "too late! I can't believe it—it doesn't mean anything to me. I don't care anything about it—I mean the poem! *I don't believe in it myself!*"

God, do you know I said that, and *meant* it? I said more—I sat and whispered it to myself: "Let them take it, yes, let them! I don't care—

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it will set me free—I shall have some money!  
But they're fools to do it, they're fools!"

March 11th.

I tremble with excitement all the day, dreaming about that thing. I go about half-mad. "Oh, just think of it," I whisper, "just think of it!"

I linger about it hungrily! He spoke as if he really meant to make them take it.

March 13th.

I went to see him to-day to ask. No, they had not let him know yet, but they had the manuscript. He would write me.

I made up my mind that I would not bother him again. I will wait, hard as it is.

I sat asking myself to-day, "Do you really mean that you believe that poem is going to stir the world—this huge, heedless world you see about you? Have you truly that blind, unreasoning faith that you try to persuade yourself you have?"

Ah, I don't know what I believe now. Only, once I had my young courage,—I feared not the

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world, I could do anything. Now I am but one among a million.

March 16th.

I force myself to read these things that half-interest me; but I think I spend a quarter of my time wandering about whispering that they are going to publish it. I cry out, "Oh, they must!" I go into the library and stare at the magazine and think of it there. I walk past the publishers', and think of it there! I have been inquiring all about publishing, about terms and all that sort of thing. It makes my brain reel—why, they might pay me five hundred dollars for it! Think of it—five hundred dollars!—I could go crazy with such a thought as that.

And then I think what the reviews will say of it, and I cry, "Oh, no, it can't be true!"

Again I find myself saying, "Only let them take it! I don't care about the rest, whether it succeeds or not—let them take it!"

March 18th.

I walked past the editor's office to-day. It took just every bit of will that I had, not to go in. I said: "He might know even now, and I wouldn't hear till to-morrow!"

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But I didn't do it. I said I would wait a week, anyhow.

March 20th.

I don't know what in the world to make of it.

The week ended to-day, and nothing yet; and I hit upon another scheme, I went to the publishers. I said: "I will ask them, and he needn't know anything about it and it won't bother him." So I went in and they referred me to the manuscript clerk. She said she had never heard of *The Captive*.

"But it's here somewhere," I said, "the editor brought it here."

"There is no manuscript ever comes here," she answered, "that is not entered on my books."

"But," I said, "some member of the firm must have it."

"If any member of the firm got it," she said, smiling, "the first thing he would do would be to bring it to me to enter in the books."

I insisted. I wanted to see somebody in the firm, but she answered me there was no use. Finally she suggested that they might know something about it up in the offices of the magazine. I went there, but no, no one had ever heard of it there.

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I came home dazed. I don't know what in the world to make of it. He certainly said that the firm was reading it. I wrote to-night to ask him about it.

March 23d.

I have waited day by day in the utmost perplexity to hear from him about that. I should have heard from him yesterday. I don't know what in the world to make of it. Can he have gone in to them privately? Or can he have forgotten it—he is so busy!

I dread the latter circumstance—but I dread as much to anger him in the other case.

March 27th.

I waited four days more. I went up to see him. Just as I feared. I have annoyed him. I could see it. I know he must be tired of seeing my face.

“Mr. Stirling,” he said, “I have told you that the poem is being read by the firm, and that I will let you know the moment I hear from them.”

“I only came,” I said, “because the clerk told me——”



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“There are some things clerks don’t know,” he put in.

I tremble at the thought of making him angry. I will not go near him again.

March 30th.

I am doing my best to keep my mind on some reading, so as not to make the agony unbearable. But it is very hard—the mails disturb you. I can only read in the middle of the day, and at night. In the morning I expect the first mail, trembling; but after that I know a city letter can’t come till afternoon, so I can read. Then again at night I know it can’t come.

—I am reading *The Ring and the Book*. I have always found that it doesn’t do to take vulgar opinions. I had supposed I should find *The Ring and the Book* hard reading.

It is skippable—the consequence of having a foolish scheme to fill out. But the story of *Pompilia and Giuseppi* is one of the finest things I know of anywhere.

April 3d.

It has been another week. I could not stand it any more. I am going over to the publishers’ again this afternoon.

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—What in Heaven's name does this thing mean? I met the satisfied smile of the clerk again. "We have never seen the manuscript, Mr. Stirling!"

If you could only see how positive she is! "I don't know anything about what the editor told you, I can only tell you positively that he has never submitted any such manuscript to the firm, or to anybody connected with the firm."

That thing drove me wild. I don't know what to make of it. Surely he's given it to some one, for he told me so.

I went up to the magazine rooms, and he was in his office; but he had left word that he would not see any one, and they would not even take in my name.

April 4th.

I can do nothing but haunt that place till I find out what it means! It has been three weeks and a half since he gave it to them, and he said I would hear at once. What in the world does he think it means to me? Can't I presume the slightest gleam of interest, of care, on his part?

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April 5th.

To-day I could not stand it any longer. I went to the place again. I saw the manuscript clerk once more—the same answer. I went upstairs; he was there again, but busy. I wrote a note and left it. I explained that I did not in the least wish to trouble him, but that the thing meant a great deal to me, and that I had the utmost need of promptness; that it had been almost four weeks since he gave it to the firm, and that nobody there seemed to know anything about it.

April 7th.

He did not answer my letter! I thought I should hear to-day. O God, this is the most tormenting thing! Think what it means! And what in Heaven's name has he done? Surely some one—he must have given it to some one!

Only why in the world doesn't he understand my perplexity and explain?

April 9th.

No letter yet. I went back to the publishers' again this morning. I have been wandering by the place every day since. They had not seen it yet. She said she'd have the firm inquire, but I

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said not to, as it might annoy him. "He surely has given it to some one, you know."—She laughed at me.

I went up to the magazine office again. He was not there, but I saw his associate. The associate did not know anything about it either.

April 10th.

I waited one day more and no answer. I wrote to him again to-night, begging him to please reply.

—I have begun several novels, but I can't get interested in them. I am simply sick. I came out of that horrible restaurant with money enough to do me for ten weeks, and here are over five of them gone in this hideous way. Oh, it is monstrous!

It has been nine weeks and a half since I gave him that poem in the beginning! I never spent nine such weeks of horror in my life.

April 12th.

"In answer to your letter I beg to inform you that the manuscript of *The Captive* is now in the hands of the firm, and that you may expect a decision in about a week."

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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So! It is a relief at any rate to know that the thing is all right. I can wait a little better now.

Of course I knew it must be there. A plague on that foolish clerk!

April 14th.

All the while that I am writing about this thing I keep up my courage by thinking what it will mean to me. It is something so immense that I can hardly realize it. I shall be famous!—And he really liked it, there can be no doubt about that! He was too busy to talk much, but he showed he liked it.

April 17th.

Oh my soul, I think this is the most frightful thing—is it not simply a nightmare? I have been pacing the floor to-night in an agony. *They have never seen that manuscript!*

I was going by there to-day, and I couldn't withstand the temptation; the week was not up, but I said: "If I inquire, there's no reason why he should know about it." I went in.

And that terrible clerk—she smiled at me still! The more I talked, the more she shook her head. "There's no such manuscript ever

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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been seen here," she said. I showed her the letter, and that decided her to go in and see the firm. They sent out word that neither they nor their readers had ever heard of it, but that they would write to the editor at once.

Oh, I think this is horrible—horrible! And then just guess what I did! I couldn't bear the agony—I went to the other place, and he wasn't there, and so at last I went to his club.

He wasn't at the club, but they told me where he was; and I spent ten cents telephoning him. At this place they said he had an engagement to be there later, so I spent another ten cents, and that time I found him. I told him who I was. "The week isn't up yet," I said, "but the firm say they have never received the manuscript."

"So?" he said; his voice sounded hard, I thought, and it made me shudder. "You come up to see me the day after to-morrow at ten o'clock, and you'll hear about your manuscript."

And that is all. And I walked out of the great, rich club, and I have been pacing up and down in my own garret ever since. I am almost too ill with anxiety to stand.



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April 18th.

And to-day I can only wait. Once I lay down upon the bed and cried.

April 19th.

I don't know how to tell this thing. I am simply dazed. I had an experience to-day—the most hideous thing that I think ever happened to me in my life. Oh, I have been like a madman ever since—I lost my head—I did not know what I was doing. I was really crazy—it is three o'clock in the morning, now, but I shall write it down—I can not sleep.

To-day I went up to see that man as he told me to. I went trembling with suspense—just think, it has been eleven weeks since this agony began. And I went into his office—he was alone; and when he saw me he sprang to his feet—my soul, he looked like a tiger. He stood there in the middle of the room fairly gasping with rage.

“So,” he cried, “you’ve come, have you! I tell you, young man, I have never been subjected to such an outrage as this in my life! I would not read another manuscript for you—why, I

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wouldn't stand for such an imposition from Balzac or Thackeray—no, sir, I wouldn't!"

I stared at the man simply speechless with astonishment. "Why," I panted, "what do you mean?"

"What do I mean? Why, you have hounded me about this city until I'm crazy. There's no place I can go to escape you. You come to my office, you come here, you come to my club! You have made yourself a perfect pest at the publishers to every one! Why——"

He stopped out of breath. Of course I have no courage or head with men—I was ready to grovel at his feet. "My dear sir," I pleaded, "I assure you I didn't mean to do anything of the kind—it was only that the clerk kept telling me——"

"I don't care what the clerk kept telling you! I tell you that that manuscript has been in the hands of the company since the day I told you I would leave it there. Of course there have been delays, there is all sorts of routine to go through with; but suppose all our contributors did the same thing—what would we do?"

He was talking at me as if expecting a reply. Fortunately the right words came to my lips—

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I was really ready to cry with shame and perplexity.

"I don't think it is quite the same with all your contributors," I said, with a trembling voice. "While I have been waiting I have been simply starving."

It seemed to clear the atmosphere. He stared at me, and then he sat down. He was ashamed of himself, I could see. "Why," he said, "you couldn't have been paid anything for months."

"I didn't know," I said, "I didn't know anything about it. But I have been starving."

He spoke more quietly. "Mr. Stirling," he said, "I'm very sorry about this, the whole thing has been unfortunate. Excuse me that I spoke angrily; let us not think any more about it."

I stood there, feeling almost like crying, I was so nervous.

"Now, about that manuscript," he went on, "I'm doing what I can to learn about it. It's been there all along, as I told you, and you will hear about it soon. Why, Mr. Stirling, I even took the trouble to send my secretary down there yesterday to make sure that it was all right."

"I did not want you to go to any such trouble," I stammered.

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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“That’s all right,” he said, “don’t mention it. Now they will have decided in a few days, and I will write you——”

“No, please do not,” I said, still with my abject humility. “Don’t take any more trouble—let me go there and find out——”

“By no means!” said he. “Take my advice and don’t go near there again under any circumstances. You can’t tell how much an author hurts himself by troubling a publisher as you have done. Don’t go near there—let me write to you.”

I promised that I would; and then with more abjectness I got myself out of that room, and I went out and sat down upon a step near by, simply shaking like a leaf.

“Oh, heavens!” I gasped. “That was horrible! Horrible!”

I sat dazed—thinking about it—thinking it over and over—I couldn’t understand it, try as I might. Why should he have been so angry *that* day—had he not told me to come there? And had he not said I should have a report?

—And then suddenly something flashed over me that made me leap! That firm had written

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him a letter the day before yesterday asking about the manuscript, and *that* was why he was angry! And he had sent his secretary down to inquire!—But why in Heaven's name should he send his secretary down to inquire *when he had a telephone connecting with the firm right there in his office!*

And so I saw it—all in one instant the thing flashed over me!

I was so wild I paid a car-fare—I rode straight as a die down to that place, and I went in and saw the clerk.

“He has sent the manuscript now,” I said, “hasn't he?”

“Yes,” she said.

“He sent it in yesterday?” I said.

“Yes.”

“He sent it by his secretary, didn't he?”

“Yes,” she said again.

“Thank you,” I answered, and went out.

Is not that simply monstrous, simply awful beyond words? I have been beside myself to-night with rage, with amazement, with perplexity. Oh, think what I have suffered at the hands of that frightful man! And what have I *done* to

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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him—why should he have treated me so? What does it mean? I am baffled every way I turn.

The thing is like flame in my blood—like acid in my veins. It makes me hysterical with pain. I cry aloud.

—What do you mean by it, you monster, you wretch? Why, here for eleven weeks I have been hanging upon your every word—eleven weeks of my life spent in torment—absolutely flung away! *Eleven weeks!* And you have lied to me—and you have kicked me about like a dog!

What do you mean? What do you mean? Tell me, above all, *why* you did it! Were you torturing me on purpose? Or did you simply forget it? But then, how could you forget it when you had to tell me all those miserable falsehoods? And when you had to write me those letters?

And then to-day!

That is the thing that goads me most—to-day! I stood there, cringed before you like a beaten cur—you kicked me—you spit upon me! And it was every bit of it a lie! That insolent rage of yours—why, it wasn't even genuine!



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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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You weren't even angry—you knew that you had no reason to be angry—that you had treated me as if I were a worm to tread on! And yet you stood there and abused me!

Oh—why, the thing is madness to think of! It is more madness the more you realize it! I have never known anything like it before in my life.

Yes—actually—it is something quite new to me. I have met blind people—people who would not heed me—but a really evil person I have never known before! A person who has no respect for another's rights—who would trample upon another! Oh, you miserable wretch—and the lies—the lies! The hateful sneaking of it—you black-hearted, insolent man! The manuscript had been there all the time! *The delays, the routine!* And you had sent your secretary down to inquire! And above all—oh, above all—the prince of them—I must not go near there lest I should injure myself! I must not go near them—they were so weary of seeing me! And I never saw a single soul there in my life but one clerk!

I never suffered such a thing as this before in all my days—deliberate, brutal injustice! And

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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that I should be so placed as to be a victim of such a thing—that I should have to hang upon your words and to be at your mercy for eleven weeks of agony! You are a great editor, a club-man, a rich man! You have fame and power and wealth—and you stand up there and scald me with your rage—and with your heart a mess of lies all the time!

—But *why* did you do it? That is the thing I ask myself in consternation. Why? *Why?*—Were you not interested in my work? If you weren't—why didn't you give it back to me, and let me go my way? And if you were—if you had any idea of publishing it—then why did you use me in this way? Where was the manuscript all this time? What did you mean to do with it? How long did you expect me to wait? And what object did you have in telling me untruths about it meanwhile?

—The whole thing is as blank to me as night. That a man should have in him so much infinite indifference about another as to leave that manuscript in a drawer, and write me that I was to “have a report on it within a week”! Why, it is something of which I can not even think.

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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And then to get out of it by that sham anger and that sneaking!—

April 20th.

I have done absolutely nothing but brood over this thing and rage all day. What am I to do?—I sat and wondered if there was anything I could do but go and shoot that man. And I asked myself: Ought I not at least to go and get the manuscript from that accursed place this instant? Ought I not to have taken it then and there? But see the utter misery of my situation, the abject shame of it—suppose they were to take the thing! It is my one hope in this world—I dare not lose it—I have to leave it there!

But then, what hope is there now? I ask. Why, he was going to urge it upon them! And now, of course, he's simply sent it in there without a word!

Don't you see what it was—it was that letter of inquiry they wrote him! He paid no more attention to me than if I were a hound; but he had to send it when they wrote! And perhaps they said something about carelessness and that made him wild.

Oh, the thing is an endless spring of gall to

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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me! I am all raw with it—I have to rush out on the street and walk away my passion. I never saw my situation so plainly—the horrible impotence of it! Just see what I struggle against, the utter insane futility of everything I do! Why, I beat my wings in a void, I hammer my head against a wall!

—And now I must wait for that thing to come back—don't I know that it will come back? And don't I know that that will be the end of me?

A black, horrible gloom has settled down upon me. I am utterly lost in despair.

April 21st.

I will write no more about that man—my whole being is turned to bitterness. I wonder at myself—I have no longer one feeling left in this world except a black brooding hatred of him!

—And all the time the thing haunts me like a detective story—I can't find the solution! What does it mean? Why did he do it? It is so irrational—so impossible—so utterly incomprehensible! And shall I *never* know the truth about it?

April 24th.

“ We regret that we are not advised to undertake the publication of *The Captive*. We return the manuscript by express.”

There it is! I read that thing, and I felt my whole being sinking down as if into hell. There it is! And that is the end of it all! Oh, merciful Providence, is it not simply too cruel to be believed! Eleven weeks! *Eleven weeks!*

—I can do no more—I do not know where to turn. I believe I shall go mad with my misery.

April 25th.

To-day I thought I would go up and see him—I thought I could not live until I knew what this thing meant. I heard myself saying, “ I *demand* to know why you treated me thus? I say I demand it! Before God, how *dared* you—or don’t you believe in a God? ”

—Then again I thought, I will plead with him. It must be some mistake—I can’t believe that it is all over. Why, he liked it! And now perhaps it was only looked over by some careless reader and flung aside!

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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But no—I could not go near the place! I could not face that man again. The memory of his look as he stood there in his insolence is so hateful to me that it makes me tremble.

April 26th.

I see myself crying this out from the rooftops. I even wrote a letter to a newspaper, but I did not send it.

I went to a lawyer, a man I used to know. I told him I had no money—I asked him to help me. But I can not sue him—he was under no obligations, it seems; and I can not prove that the manuscript was injured in value by the delay.

So there is nothing that I can do. He will go his way—he will never think of me again. He is rich and famous.—

—I have just nine dollars left of my money. I can not possibly make it do more than three or four weeks; and meanwhile I sit and brood and watch them go by in blank despair.

April 28th.

I fight with myself—I must get that hellish thing out of my head! I went to a publisher's to-day—I didn't have the heart to go in, but I gave it to the clerk.



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It will take two or three weeks. This will be the eighth publisher.

I said to-day: "I will force myself to read, I will get myself together; I will not let myself be stamped to the mud by this man."

There is nothing I can do about it—I only poison my whole soul thinking of it. I must put it out of my mind—I must work!

May 1st.

I said to myself to-day: "Do you really believe that the world would heed that poem? Do you think that if any publisher published it, he could sell it?" I answered, "No, I do not."

If one took it I should think I was making a fool of him. I offer it on that chance!

—What am I going to do? I do not know. I must try to find some work that does not tear me to pieces; and then perhaps some day I shall be able to write something different.

May 3d.

My whole soul is in a turmoil these days. I struggle,—I can not give up while I live; but for what do I struggle? I am a man journeying in a thicket; I can not see one step before me.

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—I try to forget myself—I try to get interested in a book. But I never had but one kind of interest. I can not get used to living without a purpose, without enthusiasm, without morality.

I have no ideas any more. My whole life is shrunken and contracted. It is all stagnant—the garden of my soul is full of weeds. The broad fields that I used to cover, the far-off things I used to strive for—what have they to do with me now?

—I heard a gull to-day—far, far up—a mere speck in the sky. I started, as I watched him vanish. Then I said: “But you, too, will have to come down and mingle in the turmoil and the danger!”

May 6th.

I go over into the Park—the springtime is in full glory, all the sights that used to thrill my heart are there; the splendor of new verdure and young flowers, the birds that I love rioting in song. But it moves me not in the least, it only makes me ten times more mournful. I turn away.

Why, once an apple spray in blossom was to me a drunken ecstasy.

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—Shall I ever know what it is to be generous, and rich and royal in my heart again? To know that surging fulness of emotion that makes you think of gold and purple and regal pomp?

I tell you the whole thing is a question of money with me. I have come down to the bare bed-rock of sordidness—I must have money—*money!*—It is everything in this world to me. I can never think of anything else again until I have it.

I see myself going out into the world and fighting as other men fight, and making a place in it for myself.

May 8th.

I am getting down again; my poor hoard is going! I sit and count it—I calculate it—I lay out my bill of fare. Oh, where shall I go, what *can* I do? Can I write anything? I ask. I have nothing in me but a naked, shivering longing.

I dread to be in the desperate fix I was the last time I could find no work. And yet I can not make up my mind to do anything until I hear from this one publisher more.

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## SEEKING A PUBLISHER

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May 9th.

I walked over there to-day to save a postage-stamp. They had not heard from the reader yet.

—I sit down and try to study. Then I get up and say I ought not to put it off any longer. Then again I think: "Wait until to-morrow, at any rate."

May 10th.

I was looking at that man's magazine to-day. What thoughts it brought to me—what agonies, what longings, what despair! And, above all, what ocean-floods of bitterness!

I walked all the way down to the wholesale-paper store. I thought I would prefer that to evils that I know not of. I have almost a terror of having to come into contact with new people.

But my place was filled. I trudged home again. I went to the publisher's too; nothing yet. The three weeks were up to-day.

May 12th.

I dared not wait any more to-day. I had just three dollars and ten cents left. And my rent is due the day after to-morrow. I have answered every sort of advertisement, from dish-

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washing to tutoring a boy. I guess I looked too seedy for the latter.

—Sometimes when I am wandering around in all this misery, still yearning for what I might have been, the thought comes across my mind: “And in this huge world there might yet be some one who would understand the thing! Some one who would help me! Some one by whom it would be an honor to be helped—if I could only find him.”

And here I am, having my life beaten out of me, spark by spark,—and I can’t find him—I *can’t!*

I cry out for money—for money!

But no, it is others who have it.—And the way that they use it—O God, the way that they use it!

If all the world were poor, it would not be so bad; but the sight of wealth—of infinite oceans of it squandered in perfect frenzies of ostentation! The sight of this “world”—this world, which they take quite as a matter of course!

I have seen a good deal of this world myself, and I at least do not take it thus. I gaze upon

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the men and women who do take it thus, and I say, "Are you men and women really? Or are you not some strange, un-Godmade creatures, without ever a thought about justice, without ever a gleam of reason or purpose or sense?"

May 14th.

I have tramped the streets for two days more. I was made so ill by my anxiety last time that I made up my mind I would not risk it again. I asked my landlady to-night to wait a while, as I was looking for some work. She was ungracious enough, but I have no longer any sensibilities—I only want to be safe. She can wait—she has my trunk, as I told her.

Probably she wouldn't even be as willing, if she could see what is in it! I have no longer anything to sell. I had to exchange my waiter's costume for a pair of trousers, for mine were all in rags.

I have two dollars and seventy cents. I imagine that is a safe margin.

There are no words that can tell what an absolutely deadening thing it is to be wandering about the city looking for work. It turns you



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into a log of wood—you not only no longer have an idea, you have not a thought of an idea. You simply drag on and on until the thing becomes a habit, and you go without even thinking of that.

May 15th.

“Our readers have examined with a great deal of interest the unusual piece of work which you have sent us. But it has been our experience that poetry proves such a distressing adventure commercially, that we are forced to decline the offer which you have so kindly made us. We wish, however, to assure you of our desire to see anything else which you may have on hand, or may have at any time in future.”

That is about the way the letter ran—I tore it up. I did not read it but once. I took the thing to another firm—it can't do any harm.

I have not been able to find anything to-day.

May 16th.

So long as I have thoughts I can write a journal; but while my life is that of an animal, it doesn't seem very necessary. I have always felt myself an outcast—a poet has to be that; but I never felt it quite so much as at present. I wan-

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der around from door to door; and those who have homes and money and power—they simply order me out of the way.

May 18th.

I do not think I can stand this much longer. I never had such a time before finding anything. I think my state must be written in my face—men no longer have any use for me.

I fear my coat is seedy. And I know my collar is soiled; but the two I left at the laundry won't be done till to-morrow.

I have broken my last two-dollar bill. I watch in terror for the next week—I can not face that woman again. I must save enough for that.

May 19th.

I applied for a position as office-boy to-day—I was desperate. I have not enough to last me through a week, if I pay the woman anything.

But they said I was too old.

My feet are most horribly sore. I can hardly walk. And I have the strangest ringing in my head. I could not eat any supper—and the milk won't keep in this warm weather, either.

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May 22d.

The day before yesterday, when I woke up in the morning, I could hardly stand. My head was on fire, and I do not think I have ever been so sick before. I got around to a drug-store—the man said he would give me some powders; he said they were forty cents, but I dared not pay it. He gave them to me for a quarter. He said I should have a tonic, but I haven't had it.

I was too ill to move all day yesterday. I am better to-day, but still I daren't go out. I have only eighty-five cents left.

I must manage to get out and get some work to-morrow, or I shall go mad.

I had a scene with that horrible creature yesterday. It was the second week—she thought I was shamming, I know. She said she never allowed her "roomers" to get behindhand—it was her invariable rule. O God, I was so sick I could scarcely see—I did not care what she did. I told her that I had no money; that I was waiting to get some work; that I would pay her the first moment I could.

"Why don't you keep work when you get

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it?" she demanded. "You have been idle nearly all the whole time you've been here."

I could not argue with her; she can turn me out when she likes.

May 24th.

I dragged myself out to-day. I feel better except for the blisters on my feet. But nothing to do! Nothing to do! Oh, I am half mad.

I thought to-day I would call upon some of my relatives. But I bit my lips together—no, I will not ever do that!

It is the ghastly heat that kills me. Yesterday was almost stifling, I thought I could not bear it. I never knew it to be so hot so early.

May 26th.

I have ~~got~~ but thirty-five cents, and to-day I was so tired I had to rest for two hours nevertheless. Oh, merciful heavens, but this is fiery torture!

It is half a week again. I know she will not let me stay another week. I did a strange thing—I wrapped up all my papers and carried them out under my coat. She can keep everything

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else I have, but my papers are mine. I took them to the grocery-store where I buy things and asked the man to keep them for me.

May 27th.

What does a man do when he wants to work and can't find anything? Does he really starve? Or does he get locked up? Or what?

I said to-day: I will eat nothing but bread and oatmeal till I get something to do.

May 29th.

It was just as I thought. She has demanded her money—and I have but fifteen cents! I helped a man up with a trunk and got ten. She told me that I would have to get out. It is clear to-night. I shall sleep somewhere in the Park. I can not write any more.

May 31st.

I got some work to do after all—at the height of my despair. I am giving out samples of a hitherto unequaled brand of soap.

It was yesterday morning, I met one of the men and asked him where he got the job. He said they wanted more men, so I got on a car and rode down there in haste. I made fifty cents

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yesterday, for half a day, and a dollar to-day. Thank God!

I spent the night before last in the Park, and last night in the room where I am writing. It is in a tenement-house. I paid fifty cents a week for it, and there is a drunken man snoring on the other side of a board partition.

I sha'n't go back to the other place, of course, until I get more money. Besides, she has probably rented the room.

I am so relieved at having gotten something to do. I believe I am even proud of the soap.

I am getting used to walking all day; anything so long as one doesn't have the agonizing worry about starvation. I am ill, but I shall keep at it, and answer advertisements meanwhile by mail, till I get something better.

I am going out to sit by the river. I can not stand the heat and stench in this room. To-morrow is Sunday. I shall have a long rest.

June 2d.

I did not go back to distribute soap to-day. I have given up the work. I have just seventy cents left in my pocket. The rent of this room



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is up on June 6th, and the money will last me until then.

On June 6th I am going to die.

—To-day I went to the publisher's. I said: "On June 6th I am going out of town. (Grim humor, that!) On June 6th you will have had the manuscript three weeks and more. I shall have to ask you to have a report by that date, or to return it to me now." He said: "You shall have the report."

If they will publish the poem, I shall wait. If not, I shall die on June 6th. That is settled.

PART III

THE END



## PART III

### THE END

LISTEN to me now. I must soon get to the end of this. I mean to tell you about it. I have spent yesterday and to-day going over this journal, explaining things that I had written too briefly, putting in things that ought to be there. I mean to tell everything.

When I began this journal it was with the idea that I should be famous, and that then it would be published. Of late I have written it from habit, mainly, never expecting that any one would see it. Now I write again for a reader, *to* a reader. I know that it will be published.

The night before last I went down by the river. As well as I can remember, these were the thoughts that came to me.

It was a calm, still night, and I sat watching the lights on the water. Then suddenly I recol-

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lected the night when the yacht had passed, and I had heard the woman singing. It came back to me like an apparition, that voice and that melody. I heard it again more plainly than words can tell, dying away over the water; and a perfect sea of woe rolled over my soul.

I thought of that night, what I had been that night, what hopes I had had, what fervor, what purpose, what faith. That was, you remember, just when I was at the height of my work; and the memory came back to me, as it has never come back to me since the day that I came out of the forest with my book. It simply overwhelmed me, it shook me to the very depths of my being. I buried my face and burst out sobbing. It shook away from me all the hideous dulness that had mastered me. I saw myself as I was, ruined, lost. I cried out: "Oh, my Father in heaven, it is gone! It is gone, and it will never come back! I am a lost soul! I am a traitor, I am ruined!"

So I went on, feverishly, twisting my hands together. "I have given up the fight! I have been beaten—oh, my God—beaten! Think of those raging hours in the woods, those hours of defiance, of glory! I gazed at commonplaceness

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## THE END

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and dulness—I mocked at it; and now it has conquered me! I am trampled down, beaten! It is all gone out of me!” And then I cried out in despair and terror: “Oh, no, it can’t be! It *can’t* be!”

But even while I cried that, my thoughts fled back to the horror to which I was tied, to the samples of soap and to the filthy hole next to a drunken laborer. The thing overwhelmed me, even while I stood there trying to resolve.

I was frenzied. “I have done everything,” I panted, “I have fought and toiled and struggled—I have wept and prayed, and even begged. And yet I have been beaten—I have gone down—down! And what more is there that I can do? I shall be beaten down again! Oh, what shall I do? Is there any hope, any new plan that I can try? Shall I go through the streets and shriek it; shall I lay hold upon some man and *make* him hear me? Is there anything—*anything?*”

To make them understand what I have! To make them understand what they are doing! God gave me a vision—it may not come again for a century, it can never come again—it is mine—*mine only!* And they grind it into the dust! This demon power that is in me—don’t you sup-



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pose I know what it is? This thing that roars like the wind upon the mountains, that runs like the great billows on the sea!

I was pacing back and forth in the silent night. I had all the world about me, I cried out to it, I gripped it, to make it hear me. "Fools! oh fools!" I cried, "what is it that you *do* believe in? Blind creatures that you are, this raging faith of mine—this fervent ardor—you do not believe in *that*! You do not believe in enthusiasm, you do not believe in ecstasy, you do not believe in genius! You think that I am mad, poor raving poet! You see me sick, haggard, dragging myself about.

"But I am caged, I tell you,—*i* am caged! You are killing me as you would kill some animal; and I am never to sing that song—I am never to sing that song!"

The thing was a madness to me. "No, no!" I rushed on, "I will! I will get free—I say I will! If I must, I will go out and beg on the streets, before I will let this thing die! Show me the vilest of you—I will get down upon my knees before him—I will kiss his feet and beg him to let me live! There is no degradation of my *self* that I will not bear! I!—what am I?"

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## THE END

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I am a worm—I am filth—I am vanity and impertinence and delusion. But *this* thing—this is *God*! Oh you man with a carriage, will *you* not give me a little? For a hundred or two of dollars I can live for a year! And you—why, see that ring on your finger! You would not think twice if you lost it; and yet think what I could do with that bauble! Oh, see how you abuse life—how you mock it, how you trample upon it—how you trample upon *God*!

—“So I go about all day, haunted all the time, raging, lusting for my task. And you who believe in genius in the past, and do not believe in it in the present! Some of you had this faith when you were young; but I have it always—it is *I*! I was born for that, I will die for that! It is my love, my food, my health, my breath, my life! It comes to me wherever I am—carrying trays in a restaurant—pacing back and forth by the river—sitting here in my room and writing of it!”

So I thought, so I cried out; and each time as the thing surged in me, I sank down and moaned and sobbed. “No, it is all lost. I am

helpless. I am beaten! I am walled in and tortured! I am a slave, I am a prisoner—I——”

—And so the torrent of my thoughts sped on, and so I rushed with it—rushed to my fate. For suddenly I came to four words—four fearful words that roared in my soul like the thunder!—

“I AM A CAPTIVE!”

It was like the falling of a bolt from the sky. It came with a sound that stunned me, with a flash that lit in one instant the whole horizon of my mind.

“I am a captive! I am *The Captive*! Fool that I am,—pent here in these prison-walls of tyranny, and beating out my brains against them! Panting—praying—cursing—pining to be free! And I am *The Captive*!”

The thing struck terror into the last chambers of my soul. I stood stock still; I felt my flesh quiver, I felt my very hair move. I saw a pair of demon eyes glaring into mine—I saw all the wildness and the fearfulness of life in that one instant.

“I wrote a book, I tried to make it true—and, oh, my God, how have I succeeded!”

I do not know what I did, I was half-crazed, as in a nightmare. I fought and struggled; but

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I was in the grip of a truth, and though it set my brain on fire, I had to face it.

I was The Captive! I was The Captive! And I was crying out against circumstances—I was crying out against my fate—and all the time there it stood and faced me—the truth, the iron truth:

*—I was to die!*

A sudden fury swept over me—my whole being flamed with wrath. “What!” I cried. “I shall go on in this servitude—in this degradation! I shall go on playing the lackey to the filthy pleasures of men, cringing, crouching before any insult—begging for my bread—begging to keep my miserable self alive! And I shall see one by one my virtues die in me, my powers, my consecrations! I shall sink into a beast of burden, into a clod of the earth, into a tool of men!

“And I, who wrote The Captive—my God, who wrote The Captive! I, who stood upon that height, drank in that glory, sang with those angels and gods! I, who was noble and high-born—pure and undefiled—seer and believer—I! I walked with Truth—and now I am a slave; a whimpering, beaten hound! They have made a

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eunuch of me, they have cut away my manhood! They have put me with their swine, they have fed me upon husks, they have bid me drink their swill! And I bear it, by God, I bear it! And why?——

*“I bear it that I may live!”*

“Come here, come here! Look at this!” The thing seized me by the shoulders and shook me, the thing with the fiery eyes. “Did you *mean* it, all that you wrote in that book—did you mean it, those vows that you swore in the forest? Were they the truth of your soul as you faced your God—or were they shams that you dallied with to please your vanity? Answer me! *Answer!*”

I sank down upon the ground as I heard that voice. I was shuddering with fear; and I moaned aloud: “I don’t want to die! I want to live, I want to do my work!”—And then I heard the voice say, “You hound!”

And so I shut my hands like a vise; and I panted: “No, no! Come! Take me! I will go!” I think it must have been hours that I lay there, wrestling in horrible agony. I cried again

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and again: "Yes, yes,—I will do it! I will do it!" I fled on breathlessly, whispering, panting to myself. Before I knew it I was saying part of *The Captive*—the first fearful lines of the struggle:

Spirit or fiend that led me to this way!

Oh, tell me, was ever poet so taken at his word before?

I thought of that then, and I shook like a leaf with the pain of it. Again and again I faced it, again and again I failed. It was physical pain, it was a thing that I could feel like a clutch at my heart. Was it not tearing out my very soul?

But the voice cried out to me: "You have been a slave to the world! You have been a slave to life! You have been crucified upon the cross of Art!"—Yes, and all things a man may sacrifice to Art but one thing; he may not sacrifice his soul!

"What!" it rushed on. "Have you so much faith in your art, and no faith in your God? Is it for *Him* that you have so much need to fear, to crouch and tremble, to plot and to plan—for *Him*? And when he made you, when he gave you your inspiration—his soul was faint?"



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“ He that sendeth forth the surging spring-time, and covereth all the earth with new life! He that is the storm upon the sea, the wind upon the mountains, the sun upon the meadows! He that poureth the races from his lap! He that made the ages, the suns and the systems throughout all space—he that maketh them forever and smiteth them into dust again for play! He that is infinite, unthinkable, all-glorious, all-sufficient—*He hath need of thee!*”

“ He hath need that thy wonderful books should be written, that mankind should hear thy wonderful songs! Thy books, thy songs, that are to last through the ages! And when this earth shall have withered, when the sun shall have touched it with his fiery finger, when it shall roll through space as silent and bare as the desert, when the comet shall have smitten it and hurled it into dust, when the systems to which it belongs—the sun into which it melted—shall be no more known to time—*where then will be thy books and thy songs?* Where then will be these things for which thou didst crouch and tremble, didst plot and plan? For which thou didst lick the feet of vile men—*for which thou didst give up thy God!*”

And then I leaped up and stretched out my

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## THE END

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arms. "No! No!" I cried aloud: "I have done with it! Have I not fought this fight once, and did I not win it—this fight of The Captive? And can I not fight it and win it again? Away, away with you, world, for I am a free man again, and no slave! Soul am I, *will* am I, unconquerable, all-defying! In His arms I lie, in His breath I breathe, in His life I live—I am *He*! Fear I know not, death I know not, slavery and sin and doubt and fear I will never know again!"

Nay,—nay. Go thy road, proud world, and I go mine!—

In dem wogenden Schwall,  
in dem tönenden Schall,  
in des Welt-Athems  
wehendem All!—  
ertrinken—  
versinken—  
unbewusst—  
höchste Lust!

Oh, think not of that poetry! Think of the music! The surging, drunken, overwhelming waves of music! Do you not hear them—do you not hear them?—

Wie sie schwellen,  
mich umrauschen!  
Soll ich athmen,  
soll ich lauschen!

So the thing went; and I panted and throbbed, and sank down upon the ground for weakness. There came to me all that mad poetry that I had written myself, all that victory that I had won, that freedom, that vision, that glory! It came to me ten times over, for was it not everything to me now? It was more than I could bear, it split my brain.

And it would not leave me. All through the long, long night I prayed and wept with it; and in the morning I reeled through the street with it, and men stared at me.

But here was one time when I did not fear men! I was free—I was a soul at last. I had won the victory, I went my way as a god. I had renounced, I had given up fear, I had given up my *self*. My mind was made up, and I never change my mind. I had passed the death-sentence upon myself, I walked through the streets as a disembodied soul—as the Captive dragged to the banquet-hall.

But no, I went to my torture of myself.

I went to the store. It was early Sunday morning, and the place was just open.—I got my papers and put them under my arm—my original

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draft of The Captive, and all my journal. I went down the street and came to a place where a man was burning some trash.

I was a demon in my strength just then; my head reeled, but I went with the dancing step of new-born things. I stood upon the heights, I "laughed at all Sorrow-play and Sorrow-reality"! "Ho, sir," I cried, "I have things here that will make a fire for you!"

And so I knelt down and unwrapped The Captive. "There is much fire in this," I said; "once I thought it would explode, I did. It was a shot that would have been heard around the world, sir! Only I could not pull the trigger."

The man stared at me, and so I burned it, page by page, and laughed, and sang a foolish song that I thought of: *Stride la vampa!*

And afterward I unwrapped the journal. I laughed at my journal—'tis a foolish thing; but then all at once my conscience touched me. I said: "Is it not a shame? Is it not small of you? They would not heed you!—fool, what of it? Perhaps it is not their fault—certainly it is their sorrow. But you will not get much higher than you are now by trampling upon them."

And so I stopped; and I wrapped up my

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journal again. "You have fire enough now, sir," I said to the man. "I will keep this to build another fire with."

I went on. "Let them have it," I said, "let them make what they can out of it." And then I laughed aloud: "And they will discuss it! And there will be reviews of it! And wise articles about it! And learned scholars will write tomes upon it, showing how many sentences there are in it ending with a punctuation mark; and old ladies and Methodist ministers will shake their heads over it and say: 'See what comes of not believing in Adam!'"

I walked on, singing the Ride of the Valkyries, the children staring at me, going to Sunday-school.

But I was glad that there was another copy of *The Captive* left. I love even that wicked editor now.

—All that was a day and a half ago. I am not so happy now, but I am very calm. I have found my righteousness again, and I can take whatever comes.

And tasks in hours of insight willed  
Can be in hours of gloom fulfilled!

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## THE END

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June 3d.

I have now three days more to wait, to learn if *The Captive* is accepted. I have money enough to last me till then. If it is not accepted I should obviously have to starve, should I not? For I will never serve the world again. And am I a sheep that must be driven? No, I shall find a quicker way of dying than by starvation. In the meanwhile I live my life and say my prayer.

I have thought a great deal about the thing, and it seems by no means best for the world that it should treat all the men who have my gift as it has treated me. Let the world take notice that I perish because I have not cheap qualities. Because I was born to sing and to worship! Because I have no alloy, because I will not compromise, because I do not understand the world, and do not serve its uses! If I only knew all the book-gossip of the hour, and all the platitudes of the reviews! If only I knew anything of all the infinite frivolity and puerility that occupies the minds of men! But I do not, and so I am an outcast, and must work as a day laborer for my bread.



—The infinite irrationality of it seems to me notable. Why, upon the men of genius of the *past* you feed your lives, you blind and foolish men! They are the bread and meat of your souls—they make your civilizations—they mold your thoughts—they put into you all that little life which you have. And your reviews have use enough for *them*! Your publishers publish enough of *them*! *But what thoughts have you about the NEW teacher, the NEW inspirer?*

The madness of the thing! I read books enough, it seems to me, telling of the sufferings of the poets of a century ago!—of the indifference of the critics, the blindness of the public, of a century ago. And those things pain you all so cruelly! But the possibility of their happening to the poets of the *present*—it never seems to enter into your heads! Why, that very man who sent me back his curt refusal by his secretary—he writes about the agonies of Shelley and Keats in a way that brings the tears into your eyes! And that is only one example among thousands.

What do these men think? Is it their idea that the public and the critics are now so true and so eager that the poets have nothing more to

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fear? That stupidity and blindness and indifference are quite entirely gone out of the world? That aspiration and fervor are now so much the rule that the least penny-a-liner can judge the new poet?

And they think that the soul is dead then! And that God has stopped sending into this world new messages and new faiths!

Oh you civilization! You society! You critics and lovers of books! Why, that new message and that new faith ought to be the one thing in all this world that you bend your faculties to save! It is that upon which all your life is built—it is that by which this Republic, for one thing, is to be made a factor in the history of mankind. But what do you do? What *have* you done? Here I am; and come now and tell me what it is that you *think* you have done. *For I have the message!—I have the faith!* And you have starved me, and you have beaten me, until I am too ill to drag myself about!

And what can I do? Where can I turn? What hope have I, except, as Swift's phrase has it, to "die like a poisoned rat in a hole"? I could wish that you would think over that phrase a little while, cultivated ladies and gentlemen. It

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is not pleasant—to die like a poisoned rat in a hole.

You ask me to believe in your civilization; you ask me to believe in your love of light! Let me tell you when I would believe in your civilization and your love of light.

I say that the last and the highest thing in this world is *Genius*. I say that Religion and Art and Progress and Enlightenment—that all these things are made out of Genius; and that Genius is first and last, highest, and best, and fundamental. And I say that when you recognize that fact—when you believe in Genius—when you prepare the way for it and make smooth the paths for it—I say that then and then alone may you tell me that you are civilized.

The thing shrieks against heaven—your cruelty, your stupidity. Since ever the first poet came into this world it has been the same story of agony, indignity, and shame. *And what do you do?*

It is poverty that I talk about, poverty alone! The poet wants nothing in this world but to be let alone to listen to the voices of his soul. He wants nothing from you in all this world but that

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you give him food while he does it—while he does it, miserable people—not for himself, but for *you*.

This is the shame upon you—that you expect—that you always have expected—that the poet, besides doing the fearful task his inspiration lays upon him—that he shall go out into the coarse, ruthless world and slave for his bread! That is the shame! That is the indignity, that is the brutality, the stupidity, the infamy! Shame upon you, shame upon you, world!

The poet! He comes with a heart trembling with gladness; he comes with tears of rapture in his eyes! He comes with bosom heaving and throat choking and heart breaking. He comes with tenderness and with trust, with joy in the beauty that he beholds. He comes a minstrel, with a harp in his hand—and you set your dogs upon him—you drive him torn and bleeding from your gates!

The poet! You make him go out into the market and chaffer for his bread! You subject him to the same law to which you subject your loafers and your louts—that he who will not work

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can not eat! Your drones, and your drunkards—and your poets! Every man must earn for himself, every man must pay his way! No man must ask favors, no man must be helped, no man shall be any different from other men! For shame! For shame!

And you love letters! You love poetry! You are civilized, you are liberal, you are enlightened! You are fools!

I tell you the agony of this thing is in me yet—it has heaped itself up in my soul all my days. It was my life, it was my *life* that cried out! And now that I can not save my own self—oh, let me at least save the others! O God, let me not die till I have said one word that reaches their hearts, till I have done something to change this ghastly thing! The voices of the ages cry out to me. Not only the hundreds who have gone before—but the hundreds and the thousands who are to come! What are *we* to do? they cry—who shall save *us*? Are we to share the same fate—are we too to struggle and die in vain? And in this world that is civilized! In this world that seeks progress! In this world that wants nothing but light!



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Not to the mob I speak, not to those who once mocked me; if none but they lived, I should hold my tongue and go. But you men who are leaders, you men who stand upon the top, you men who see!—can I not find some word to reach *you*? You men who really love books—who have money—who want nothing but to put it to use!—can I not find some word to reach *you*?

O God! And it is all so simple.

I tell you this land will never be civilized, this land will never lead mankind, it will never be anything but the torture-house that I have found it, until it makes some provision for its men of *Genius*! Until this simple fundamental thing be true—that a man may know that if he have *Genius*—that the day he shows he has *Genius*—he will be honored and protected by society and not trampled and kicked like a dog. That he will not have to go out into the market-place and vend his wares! That he will not have to make sick his soul haggling for his bread! That if he turns his strength to higher things, and exposes himself to the world thereby, he will not be trodden down in the struggle for existence! That he will



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not have to bear indignities and insults; that he will not have to write till he be ripe, or be stunted and deformed by early deprivation.

Genius. And am I not to die now?—And what matters the world?

Therefore let me write it: that I was a man of Genius. And that you have trodden me down in the struggle for existence. That I saw things that no other man has ever seen, I would have written things that no other man can ever write. And that you have trodden me down in the struggle for existence—that you have trodden me down because I could not earn my bread!

This is what I tell you—this is what I cry out to you, that the man of Genius *can not* earn his bread! That the work by which he develops his power is something absolutely and utterly different from the work by which he earns his bread! And that every hour which he gives to the one, he lessens his power and his capacity for the other! Every hour that he gives to the earning of his bread, he takes from his soul, he weakens his work, he destroys beauty which never again can he know or dream!

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And this again is what I tell you, this again is what I cry out to you: that the power by which a man of Genius does his work, and the power by which he earns his bread, are things so entirely distinct that *they may not occur together at all!* The man may have both, but then again he may only have the former.—And in that case he will die like a poisoned rat in a hole.

What is the first principle of the democracy of which we boast, if it be not that excellence, that power, that *Genius*, is not the attribute of the rich or the noble, but that it may make its appearance anywhere among men? And you who sigh for men of talent to raise American letters—what do you *do* about it? I will tell you something right now, to begin with; it will startle you, perhaps, and you may not believe it; but I mean to prove it later on. For the present I say this: that of the seven poets who constitute the glory of the literature of England in the nineteenth century, four of them were rich men, five of them were independent, one of them was endowed when he was a youth, and the seventh, the greatest of them all, died like a poisoned rat in a hole.

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And what do you *do* about it? What you do is to lean back in your chair and say: "The literary market was never so wide-awake as it is now, and the publishers never so anxious for new talent"!

Fools! And you think that the publishers are in business for the developing of talent, and for the glory of literature! And that they care about whether a man of Genius dies in the streets, or not! Why, have I not heard them tell me, with their own lips, that "a publisher who published books that the trade did not want would be driven out of business in a year"?

And you tell me that the author is an independent man nowadays! And can earn his living with his books!

It is your privilege to think that, if you choose; but perhaps you will not mind hearing what *I* tell you—that the author can find no way to a living more degrading to him than the earning of it with his books. I have shoveled snow, and shoveled manure too, in the streets, and shoveled food for swine in a restaurant. But I

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never did anything so degrading as I should have had to do if I had tried to earn my living with my books.

Oh, the author may be independent, may he! And you will escape with that fine platitude, and with that bitter mockery! And never think that the author's independence is but the fine phrase for your own indifference!

Again it is your privilege to think what you choose; but again perhaps you will not mind hearing what I tell you—that there can never be any man in this world more dependent than an author, if he be a true author. A true author is the singer and dreamer of society; and who is there more dependent than the singer and the dreamer—who is there less powerful and less cunning in the things of the body?

Why, the author gives up his whole life for your joy and help, he consecrates himself, he lashes and burns and tortures himself—for your sake! And you spurn him from you, and tell him he is “independent”!

Here is the truth, here is the crux, here is the whole thing in a sentence. A publisher is not in

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business for the furtherance of Art, or for the uplifting of humanity, or for the worship of God. He doesn't mind doing these things incidentally, of course, when the fortunate occasion arises; but do you think if he had his choice between publishing a new *Paradise Lost* to be read fifty years from date, and publishing a biography of a reigning prince, or a treatise on gastronomy, or a new dime novel by Marie Corelli in a first edition of a hundred thousand copies—do you think he would hesitate, now really?

You say that “literary excellence is identical with publishing availability”! I tell you that they are as far apart—why, that they are just exactly this far apart—as far as what mankind likes is from what mankind ought to like.

And you ask the man of Genius to cringe and tremble before the standard of what the reading public likes! You ask him to tame the frenzy of his inspiration, to pull your pleasure-carriages with his wingèd steed! He shall be no more the seer and the prophet and the leader—he shall be mountebank and public-entertainer.

And you call yourself civilized! O God!

And the poet! Again the poet! Is he not

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## THE END

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*vital* to your society? Is he not, in the last analysis, the lawmaker, the law-enforcer—this seeker, this inspirer, this man with the new vision of right? I look at this society—body enough I see, bone and muscle, and a good, large, capable stomach. Brain enough I see, too, or nearly enough; but Soul? Soul? Who will dare to tell me that there is Soul enough? And your poet—why, *he* is your Soul! He is the man who fills the millions with the breath of life, who makes the whole vast machine a living, rejoicing, beautiful thing. *He*—every noble impulse that you have has come originally from him—the memory of his words thrill in the hearts of men—pupils gather to study them—tired hearts seek them for refreshment—they grow and they fill all the earth—and never through the centuries do they die! They blossom into noble impulses, into new movements,—into reforms that reach down to the lowest wretches of the gutter, who never even heard of a poet. Why, they have reached to the very dogs, that are beaten less than they were.

And what is it that makes civilization in the end? What is it that the world really honors in



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the end? You Americans, you who love your country, you who believe in your country's institutions, who believe that your country holds in her womb the future of mankind! You who want the world to believe that!—how are you going to *get* the world to believe that? Is it—poor, impotent, foolish creatures—by covering your land until it is a maze of twenty-story office buildings? By lining it with railroads six feet apart?—Do you not know that this very hour the reason why Europe does not believe in America is that it has not a man to sing its Soul? That it has been a century in the eyes of the world, and has not yet brought forth one single poet or thinker of the first rank?

The poet! And I sought to be that man, my heart burned to sing that song! And look at me!

Who will dare to say that I might not have sung it? What chance have I had—have I not been handicapped and stunted, beaten and discouraged, punished as if I had been a loafer—by *you*, the world? Here I am—I am only a boy—and thrilling with unutterable things! And I am going down, down to destruction! Why, for

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what I had to say I needed years and years to ripen; and how can I tell now—how can any man tell now—what those things would have been?

And I—what am I?—a worm, an atom! But what happens to me to-day may happen to another to-morrow, and may happen to a hundred in a century. And who knows?—who cares?

What do you do with your railroad presidents? You take good care that *they* get their work done, don't you? They have secretaries to catch every word, they have private cars to carry them where they would go, men to run and serve them, to make smooth their paths and save their every instant for them! But your poet, your man of genius—who makes smooth *his* paths, who helps *him*? He needs nobody to run and serve him—he needs no cars and no palaces, no gold and precious raiment—no, nor even praise and honor! What he needs—I have said it once—he needs but to be left alone, to listen to the voices of his soul, and to have some one bring him food to keep him alive while he does it. That—only that!—think of it—for the most precious things of this life, the things that alone save this

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life from being a barren mockery and a grinning farce! And he can not have them—and you, you enlightened society, you never care about it, you never *think* of it!

If he comes a master, he can force his way; or if he be rich, or if some one honor him, then he can live his life and heed nothing. But when he is poor! And when he is weak! And when he is young! God help him, God help him!—for you, you great savage world, you *crush* him.

You send him to the publishers! And he is young, and crude, and inexperienced! He has not found himself, he has not found his voice, he stammers, he falters, he is weak! And you send him to the publishers!

I have said it once, I say it again: that the publisher is part of the world and his law is a law of iron—he publishes the books that will sell. And this feeble voice, this young love, this tender aspiration, this holy purpose—oh, it is a thing to make one shudder!

And these things higher yet, these things so precious that we dare not whisper them—this

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## THE END

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new awe of righteousness—this new rage at what the world loves best—this flash of insight that will astound a new age!

You send it all to the publisher!

But what *can* you do? I will tell you what you can do—I will tell you what you *will* do when you come finally to honor what is truly precious in this life—when you are really civilized and enlightened—when you really believe in and value Genius.

You will provide it that your young poet, your young worshiper, come elsewhere to receive a judgment than to the money-making publisher, and to the staring, vulgar crowd. You will provide it that he does not measure his voice against the big-drum thumping of the best-selling pomposities of the hour. You will provide it that he come, with all honor and all dignity, to the best and truest men that you can engage for the service; and that he come to be judged by one standard, and that not the standard of sales. Whether it be true, whether it be noble, whether it be sincere; whether it show imagination, whether it have melody, beauty, love, aspiration, knowl-

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## THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

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edge; whether, in short, in those forms or in any other forms, it have *power*! Whether the man who wrote it is a man worth training, whether he will repay society for its trust, whether he will bring new beauty into the world!—And then, if these things be true, so long as he works, and grows, and proves his value, so long shall he have the pittance that he needs until he be the master of his voice.

Yes, you never thought of that before! I read everything—everywhere—and I never heard it before. And what does that tell about the poverty and blindness and stupidity of this world? Are we not rich enough? Are we not the richest nation in the world? Have we not railroads and houses, food and clothing and bank-stocks enough to make the brain reel? And do we not call ourselves a Christian land? And worship as divine the Teacher who said that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”?

Oh, you world!

And what would it do? What would it mean? I will tell you a few things that it would mean.

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First of all it would mean that the man who felt in him the voice of God would know that there was a road he could travel, would know that there was a home for him. He would no longer face the fearful alternative of mediocrity or starvation. He would no longer be tempted, he would no longer be forced to turn from his faith, and stunt his development, and wreck his plans, by base attempts to compromise between his highest and what the world will pay for. Can you have any idea what that would mean to an artist? You say that you love art! Can you have any idea of the effect which that would have upon art? Upon the art of your country—upon American literature! To have a band of perhaps a hundred—perhaps a thousand, proved and chosen—the best and strongest that could be found—and set free and consecrated to the search for beauty! Try it for fifty years—try it for ten years—try the method of raising your poets in your gardens instead of flinging them into your weed-beds—and see what the result would be! See if in fifty years American literature would not have done more than all the rest of the world!

And what would it cost?—O God! Is there



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a railroad in this country so small that its earnings would not pay for it—for the whole of the thousand? Why, pay a poet five hundred dollars a year, and he is a rich man; if he is not, he is no poet, but a knave.

And there would be waste?—Yes—where is there not waste? But grant that in the whole thousand there is just *one* who is a master mind; and that him you set free and keep from defeat—that him with all his glory you make yours—and then tell me if there be any other way in this world that you could have done so much for man with your money!

—No, these are not your ways, oh you cruel world! You let every man go his way—you let him starve, you let him die in any hole that he can find. The poet—tenderest and most sensitive of all men! The poet—the master of the arts of suffering! Exposed on every side, nervous, haunted, unused to the world, knowing how to feel and knowing that alone! Is not his life an agony under any conditions,—is he not tortured for you—the world? And you leave him helpless, despairing!

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## THE END

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What is the matter with you?—How can you be so blind? There are some of you who really love books—look and see the story of genius—if it be not a thing to make you shudder and turn sick. It has been so through all the ages, and it will be so through all the ages to come, until society has a conscience and a soul. Tell me if there is anything in this world more frightful than the lot of the poets who have been born poor—of Marlowe <sup>Poe</sup> and Chatterton and Goldsmith, Johnson and Burns and Keats! And who can tell how many were choked before even their first utterance?

I can not talk of that, for it makes me sick; but I will talk of the poets who were born rich. Is it not singular—is it not terrible—how many of the great stalwart ones were rich? To be educated, to own books, to hear music, to dwell in the country, to be free from men and men's judgments! Oh, the words break my heart!

—But was not Goethe rich, and did he not have these things? And was not Hugo rich? And Milton? When he left college he spent five years at his father's country place and wrote four

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poems that have done more to make men happy than if they had cost many millions of dollars.

But let me come to what I spoke of before, the seven poets of this century in England.

I name Wordsworth and Byron, Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne, Shelley and Keats. I said that six of them were independent, and that the other—the greatest—died like a dog.

Wordsworth came first; he was young and poor and struggling, and a friend left him just such an independence as I have cried for; and he consecrated himself to art, and he revolutionized English poetry, he breathed truth into a whole nation again. And when he was clear and looked back, he made such statements as these: that “a poet has to *create* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed,” and that “my poetry has never brought me enough to pay for my shoe-strings.”

And see how the publishers and critics—how the literary world—received him! How they jeered and jibed, and took fifty years to understand him! Oh think of these things, think what they mean, you who love literature! Think that

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## THE END

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the world owes its possession of Wordsworth's poetry to the accident that a friend died and left him some money!

I name Byron; he was a rich man. I name Tennyson; he had a little competence, and he gave up the idea of marriage and for ten years devoted himself to art; and when he was thirty-two he published his work—and then they gave him a pension!

I name Browning; Browning went his own way, heeding no man; and he never had to think about money. I name Swinburne; and the same was true of him.

I name Shelley; and Shelley was wealthy. They kept him poor for a time, but his poems do not date from then. When he wrote the poetry that has been the spiritual food of the high souls of this century, he lived in a beautiful villa in Italy, and wandered about the forest with his books. And oh, you who love books, stop just a moment and listen: I am dying, and the cry of all my soul is in this. Tell me, you who love Shelley—the “pardlike spirit, beautiful and swift”—“thyself the wild west wind, oh boy

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divine!"—tell me how much you think you'd have had of that glorious burst of music—that golden rain of melody, of heavenly ecstasy—if the man who wrote had been a wholesale-paper clerk or a cable-car conductor! How much do you think you'd have had if when he'd torn himself free to write *Queen Mab*—or even if he'd been ripe enough and written his *Prometheus*—if he'd had to take them to publishers! If he had had to take them to the critics and the literary world and say, "Here is my work, now set me free that I may help mankind!"

—And when I wrote that I sank down and burst into tears. It can not be helped. It is very hard for me.—

Oh, but come face this thing—you that are responsible!

—“ But who *is* responsible? ” I hear a voice. Every single man is responsible—every single man who has money, who loves letters, and who faces these facts—*you*—*YOU*—are responsible!

Perhaps you are weary of my pleading, you think that I perish of my own weakness. But

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## THE END

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come and tell me, if you can, what it is that I have not done? What expedient is there that I have not tried, what resource, what hope? Have I not been true enough, have I not worked enough? Have I been extravagant, have I been dissipated? Did I not make my work my best? Come and reason with me—I shall be dead when you read this, but let us talk it over calmly. Put yourself here in my place and tell me what you would do. Have I not tried the publishers, the critics, the editors, the poets, the clergymen, the professors? Have I not waited—until I am sick, crazy? Have I not borne indignities enough? Have I not gotten myself kicked enough for my efforts?

—But you say: “I know nothing about *The Captive!*” Yes—so it is—then let us go back to Shelley. A fair test would be *Queen Mab* or *The Revolt of Islam*—he was my age then; but I will go ten years later and take *Prometheus Bound*. Would he have found any one to publish it? *Did* he find any one to *read* it? Why, ten or twenty years after Shelley died, Browning (then a boy) records that he searched all England for a copy of that queer poet’s works!



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Why, Shelley's poetry was a byword and a mockery; and Shelley himself—first of all he was insane, of course, and afterward he was exile, atheist, adulterer, and scoundrel. They took his children away from him, because he was not fit to take care of them!

And he would not have been welcomed with open arms, I think! And he wouldn't have been set free—consecrated soul that he was. And sensitive, nervous, fragile, hysterical boy—do you think he would ever have written his poems, that he would ever have uttered his message?

I have to make somebody understand this thing, somehow. I suggest that you think what that would have meant to you—to you who love poetry. Think that you would never have read:

Oh wild west wind, thou breath of Autumn's being! . . .  
Oh lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud,  
I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed!

Think that you would never have read;

Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know!

That you would never have read:

On a poet's lips I slept!

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## THE END

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I repeat that I have to make somebody understand this thing. I try that plan a little more. Listen to me now—think what it would have meant if that wise friend had not died when he did; think that you would never have read:

And then my heart with rapture fills,  
And dances with the daffodils !

Think that you would never have read:

The light that never was on sea or land,  
The consecration and the poet's dream !

Think that you would never have read:

Blank misgivings of a creature  
Moving about in world not realized ;  
High instincts before which our moral nature  
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised !

That you would never have read:

Will no one tell me what she sings?  
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things  
And battles long ago.

I say a third time that I have to make somebody understand this thing. Let us try it again now, just once again. Let us suppose that there had not been any little independence or any pension. Who can think what it would have meant

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to us? Who can think what it would mean  
never to have read

Ring out, wild bells,  
or

When the war-drum throbs no longer,  
or

Crossing the bar.  
Never to have read

Blow, bugle, blow!  
Never to have read

My strength is as the strength of ten,  
Because my heart is pure!

Oh, think not of what these things are to *you*  
—think of what they are to *men*! How many rail-  
roads would pay for them?—one, do you think?  
The work of how many libraries have they done,  
do you think? *How much money do you think*  
*could be raised in the world to-day to save them?*

*And not one cent to create them!*

—I have saved the chief thing to the last. I  
have spoken of the six fortunate ones who had  
money; I have not spoken of thee, oh my poor,  
poor Keats! The hours that I have hungered  
with thee, the hours that I have wept with thee,

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## THE END

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oh thou *my* poet, oh thou *my* Keats! Oh thou most wretched, most miserable of poets, oh thou most beautiful, most exquisite, most unthinkable of poets! Most inspired poet of England, since Milton died!—It was given to others to be beautiful, it was given to thee alone to be perfect! It was given to thee to be ecstasy incarnate, to be melody too sweet to hear! It was given to thee, alone of all poets, to achieve by mere *language* a rapture that thrills the soul like the sound of an organ. And they mocked thee, they spit upon thee, they cursed thee, oh my poor, poor Keats! Thou, the hostler's son—thou, the apothecary's clerk! Thou, sick and starved and helpless—thou, dying of disease and neglect and despair:

Oh for a draft of vintage! That hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
Dance and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth:  
Oh for a beaker full of the warm South,  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stainèd mouth;  
That I might drink and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim!

“Go back to thy gallipots, Mr. Keats!”  
Think not of Gifford—poor fool—but think of

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yourself, oh world! Think what you lost in that man! You killed him, yes, you trampled him, and you throttled him! And he was only twenty-five! And he had never finished *Hyperion*—because he had not the heart!

—Come, now, all you who love books, come quickly, and let us take up a subscription, *that we may save for men the rest of Hyperion!*

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,  
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay!

I have been sitting here from seven in the evening until three in the morning, and I can not write any more.

Only—think about this thing. Look up the facts and see if they are not true. These seven men *made* England's poetry for a century; they made England's *thought* for a century—they make it to-day! They are the inspiration of whole peoples, the sources of multitudes of noble deeds and purposes. What do you think in money would be represented by the value of these books alone? Enough to support ten thousand poets for a lifetime, do you think? And how many hundreds of thousands of students are

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## THE END

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hearing about them this day? How many young men and maidens are going out into the world owing all that they have that is beautiful to them? And all these authors of the day, all these critics and teachers, novelists and poets—how much of what they have that is true do they not owe to these men? Go ask them, go ask them!

—And you have it all because of the accident that these men were independent! You have all from six of them for that, and from the seventh you have nothing—yes, almost nothing—because he was poor! Because he was a hostler's son, and not a gentleman's son; and you sent him back to his gallipots and to his grave.

June 4th.

I wait to hear from the publisher merely as a matter of duty. I have never had the least idea that he will take the book.

I have made up my mind to drown myself. There is no mess about it, and men do not have to know of it.

I have often read of murder cases. They tie a rope around the body and a stone to the rope;



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but the stone slips out, or the rope wears, and then it is unpleasant. I used to say they were fools; why did they not get a dumb-bell or something like that, and a small chain. Then there would have been no trouble.

When I thought of that I smiled grimly. I am living on dry bread, and saving my money to buy a dumb-bell and a chain on Friday.

I pray most of the time. I have no longer the old ecstasy—such things do not come often in cities. But it will come once again before I die, that I know.

I have a strange attitude toward death. To me it is nothing. There is, of course, the pain of drowning—it probably hurts to be strangled, but I do not think it will hurt as much as ten lines of *The Captive* hurt.

About the physical part of it, the “invisible corruption,” I never think; it is enough that it will be invisible. And for the rest, death is nothing, it is the end. I have never shrunk from the thought of it, it does not come as a stranger to me now. I take it simply and naturally—it is

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## THE END

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the end. It is the end that comes to all things in this phantom-dance of being; to flowers and to music, to mountains and to planets, to histories, and to universes, and to men.

I said: "It must come some day. It may come any day. Love not thy life too much—know what thou art."

God can spare me. He got along without me once, and doubtless he can do it again. There are many things that I should like to see—I should like to see all the ages; but that was not my fate.

When I was young they taught me to be orthodox. And I see them stare at me now in horror. "Suicide!" they gasp. "Suicide!"

Yes!—Why not? Am I not the lord of mine own life, to end it as well as to live it?

And the law! Prate not of laws, I know of no laws, either of man or God; my law is the right and my holy will.

And the punishment! Well, and if your hell be a reality, why, it is my home—it is the home of

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all true men. The sublime duty of being damned is ever my reply to theological impertinences.

—No, the sight of death does not thrill me in the least—when I stand upon the brink it will not thrill me. It is not fearful; what the weakest of men have done, I can do. And it is not sublime. Life is sublime, life thrills me; death is nothing.

June 5th.

To-day I wished that it were winter. A wonderful idea came to me—I am almost tempted to live and wait for winter. I said: I would choose one place where the money-blind and the folly-mad assemble—where I have seen them and had my eyes burned by the sight. I would go to the opera-house on the opening night! I would go to the top gallery, and I would put my journal, my story, under my coat; and in the midst of the thing I would give one cry, to startle them; and I would dash down that long flight of steps, and shoot over the railing head-first.

—Ha! That would make them think! They might read the book, then.

What place could be more fitted? In an

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## THE END

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opera-house meet, as nowhere else in this world that I know of, the two extremes of life—God and the devil. I mean on a Wagner night! Here is the inspiration of a sainted poet, here is ecstasy unthinkable, flung wide and glorious as the dawn; and here is all the sodden and brutal vulgarity of wealth, deaf, blind, and strutting in its insolent pomposity.

—I am very ill to-day—I have a splitting headache and I am weak. It is from trying to save too much money for the dumb-bell, I fear. But I laugh—what care I? My body is going to wreck—but what care I? Ah, it is a fine thing to be death-devoted, and freed from all the ills that flesh is heir to! I go my way—do what I please—hammer on and on, and let happen, what will. What, old head!—wilt ache? I guess I can stop thy aching before long! And all ye mechanical miscellaneities—stomachs and what not! *Thou* wilt trouble me too? Do thy pleasure, go thy way—I go mine!

There is a kind of intoxication in it. I climb upon all these ills that used to frighten me—I mock at them, I am a god. I smite my head—I say, “I am done with thee, old head! I have

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thought with thee all the thoughts I have to think!"

I have made me right drunk upon life, yes, that is the truth; and now the feast is over, and I will smash the crockery! Come, boys, come!—Away with it! Through the window here with the head—look out of the way below there for the stomach—ha, ha!

—Is not that Shakespearian humor for you? Such a thing it is to be death-devoted!

—But there is a deeper side to this wonderful thing—this prospect of peace—this end of pain. All these solemn realities that were so much to thee—this "world" and all its ways—its conventions and proprieties, its duties and its trials; how now, do they seem so much to thee after all? Cynical relative that wouldst "leave it to time"—was I so wrong, that I would not hear thy wisdom? Suppose thou wert coming with me to-morrow—hey? And to leave all thy clothes and thy clubs, thy bank-account, and thy reputation, and thy stories! Ah, thou canst not come with me, but thou wilt come after me some day, never fear. This is a journey that each man goes alone.

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## THE END

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Oh, it is easy, to be a man when you are sentenced to die. Then all things slip into their places, power and pride, wealth and fame—what strange fantasies they seem! What tales I could tell the world at this minute, of how their ways seem to me!—Oh, take my advice, good friend, and pray thy God for one hour in which thou mayst see the truth of all those foolish great things of thy life!

I read Alastor this afternoon. What a strange vision it is! And I, too, in awe and mystery shall journey away unto a high mountain to die.

—And then later I went out into the Park. I saw a flower; and suddenly the wild ecstasy flashed over me, and I sank down upon a seat, and hid my face in my hands, and everything swirled black about me. I cried: “I do not want to die! Why, I am only a boy! I love the flowers—I want to see the springtime!”

And then I felt some one take me by the shoulder, and heard a grim voice within me say, “Come! Come!”

Oh, it will be all right, never fear! Never yet have I failed to do what I resolved to do.



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And thou world, thou wouldst have me thy slave; but I am no man's slave—not I!

My death-warrant is ready. I go for it to-morrow.

June 6th.

Last night I knelt by the bedside, far into the deep hours, far into the dawn. The whole drama of my life rolled out before me, I saw it all, I lived it all again; and Him in whose arms I lay—I blessed Him for the whole of it. Now that the pain is gone I see that it was beautiful, that flower of my life. Other flowers the plant might have borne; but this flower was beautiful; and each flower is for itself.

I stretch out my arms, I float upon a tide, back, back, into the rolling source of things. Weep not for me, you who may love me; I can not die, for I never was; that which I am, I was always, and shall be ever; I am *He*. Go out into the world, you who may love me, and say, "This flower is he, this sunset cloud is he; this wind is his breath, this song is his spirit."

What is my faith, the faith in which I die? It is the faith of modern thought; it is the faith

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## THE END

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of the ages. It is a spiritual Pantheism, an impassioned Agnosticism.

A Presence am I; what is my source I know not, nor can I ever know. The moral fact I know, my will; and I take it as I find it, and rejoice in the making of beauty.

Do I believe that I ever shall live again? I know that I shall not. I do not insult His perfection and my faith, with the wish that such as I should be immortal. What I have He gave me; it is His, and He will take it. I have no rights, and I have no claims. I see not why He should give me ages because He has given me an hour. He never turns back, He never makes over again—that I know.

—And neither do I ask rewards; my life was beautiful, I bless Him for every prayer. I ask Him not that He cover the fair painting with whitewash.

I have no fear of Oblivion. I have no thoughts about it. There are no thoughts in Oblivion.

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*The days when thou wert not, did they trouble thee? The days when thou art not shall trouble thee as much.*

—I have made up my mind that I will get some work this morning, or sell my coat, or something. I will go out into the country, I will be alone with Him to-night. I will fling off every chain that has bound me. I will fling off the world, I will fling off pain, I will fling off health. I will say, “Burst thyself, brain! Rend thyself, body, as thou wilt!—but I will see my God to-night before I die!”

I have been to the publishers. They gave me back *The Captive*. “It is done.”

(2)

THE END

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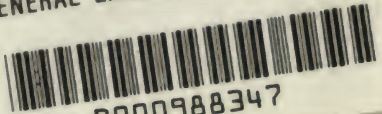
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